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## ABOUT MYSELF



BEN TURNER  
(*Photograph by Vandyk*)

[*Frontispiece*]

# ABOUT MYSELF

1863—1930

BY  
BEN TURNER

WITH A FOREWORD BY  
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*To my Wife and Daughters*





## FOREWORD

I HAVE the greatest pleasure in penning an introductory note of welcome to my friend Ben Turner's Autobiography. He has lived a wonderful life, useful in its actual achievements and inspiring in the spirit which has animated it.

Somebody has said that a generation unguided by the biographies of good and faithful men is like a sailor on the sea without a rudder or compass. Hitherto we have confined biography far too much to those who, either by luck or by merit, have found themselves in a well-lit place on the stage of life. Fortunately that is being changed, and men who by simple, faithful service have been able to lead their fellows upwards, to secure their rights, and to bring unexpressed grievances to the attention of the public, are being regarded as servants whose life story has all the interest of that of men who have lived in a more blazing light.

In these chapters, Ben has told us how he has served us. He has taken us to his fireside and to his office. He shows us how he smiles like a father—not to mention a grandfather—and how he counsels as a Trade Union leader. These chapters are, moreover, milestones showing the way by which the working classes of this country have come on within living memory and, whilst we are proud of the achievement, they give us hope in

regard to what is yet to be done. Through every one of them we see, as in a photograph, the kindly bearded face of our old friend, and whilst wishing the best of luck for his new venture we hope his supplement—which has still to be written—may be portly in size because of the number of years which it will still have to cover.

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.

*14th March, 1929.*

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## PREFACE

WHEN a man is turning past middle life and has lived, as one may put it, "full time," he may have a few recollections that to him are interesting, and, if chronicled in simple language, may be of interest to others, especially to those with whom he has been associated. Further, it may be that if some of the younger folks cared to read these recollections and reflections, they would get glimpses of life as it was, and know something of the struggles men have had to make in the everyday world and in public life that may be of use to them in some small way.

I have often been asked to put my "news and views" in book form. Perhaps what I write will be of no importance to most people, but if anything I put on to paper will spur young men and young women into social activity, into active service for the locality in which they live, or for the nation's well-being, then I shall not have written in vain. As for grammar, style, diction, etc., I have none, and shall write in my own crude way about men and movements, not with a view of self-glorification, but with a desire to be useful. I may mention things of no matter, of no moment, but that will be to please myself; and yet, after all, life is made up of small matters and little details, and the very variety of them are in a worker's everyday life.



I have lived a fairly active life, taken part in many movements, been associated with many public bodies, and met and known many interesting men and women in this and other countries.

Regarding the changes that have taken place since I was placed in this world sixty-five years ago, I shall perhaps be too reminiscent, but the improvements during that time seem vast, except when viewed by the desires and hopes and aims of people to-day, and when I reflect on what was and what is and what should be, I get into a plane of thought that overwhelms me. There are those who say things were never as bad as they are now. I have seen them worse. Life in the mass was never as good as it is now. I know there is great unemployment, a bigger body of men and women pleading for work than ever known in British history, I know there are hundreds of thousands of folks homeless, hungry and ill-clad, and it ought to be altered, as it can be altered, by sound constitutional methods; but when all is said, the mass of our population is better clad, fed, housed and served with social amenities far in advance of the Victorian or pre-Victorian age. There is madness, badness, sadness in our midst, and yet there is side by side with it gladness, and it is the duty of us all to make for the best for everybody, for the happiness of all.

BEN TURNER

*1st May, 1929.*

## CHAPTER I

### STARTING LIFE

I WAS born on August 25th, 1863. This was in the days of the Cotton Famine. Of course, I knew nothing about it, but I have heard my father and mother and aunts talk of the men and others who came over the hills from Lancashire, singing and begging for clothes and food for their folks in the cotton districts. It was in the days towards the end of the Civil War in America, and with the hold-up of cotton, the wreckage in Lancashire, consequent upon the War of the North and South, was great. My father and mother were backers of the North, for they did not believe in slavery. Of course, I knew nothing about these events, but the little villages and hamlets of the textile areas of Yorkshire were indirectly affected, for, like us, they had relatives in Lancashire, working in the cotton mills, and my mother's sister was in the war zone in America, having emigrated there a few years before the war.

By the way, it is said I was ushered into the world by a noted doctor. All I know is that his bills came in and were not always paid. Doctors were not lucky enough to have a panel system to provide them with ready money as the period of payment came along. In fact, doctors are much better paid men than they used to be, and their

mother was very good with her fingers, and our clothes were neat and tidy. My clothes were always made by her until I was in my teens.

I cannot trace my ancestry back beyond the beginning of the nineteenth century. I am told, but don't know, that an uncle of my father's was tried at York Assizes for taking part in the Luddite local rebellion, and that another earlier on was taken up and tried for some treasonable offence in the political world. If they were, good luck to them.

I don't know much about my very early childhood's days. The first thing I recollect is a little sister being put into a box and my father and mother and some aunts walking and carrying the box to a graveyard about half a mile away. I also dimly remember the election of 1868. This was the time when the bulk of the villagers like my father had no vote, and yet many of them were very keen politicians. It was the days when votes were bought and sold, and elections were fought over a wide area and in a fierce manner. It was a county election, and there were only two sides—the blues (Conservative) and the yellows (Liberal). My father and my mother and their fathers and mothers were Whigs, or yellows, and we children wore the colours of the candidates our parents—our voteless parents—favoured. I wore yellow, and the lad next door wore blue. I remember my father taking me so young down to Holmfirth to see the meeting of the Liberals, and the only thing I can remember is that when a red-faced man was speaking to the great crowd, an opposition lot were trying to drive a wagonette through the crowd, and my father took me safely away to avoid the bit of fracas that to him seemed likely

to occur. I am glad we live in better electioneering days, although I am not certain there was as much lying taking place then as there is to-day, or, if not lying, they were not as clever at inventions as they are to-day.

I also remember, as a little lad, being very hungry when there was nothing to eat. It's harder to be hungry when there is nothing to be had than to be hungry and you know you can get something. It was during one of the trade depressions, and there was no bread in the house. We had a big garret at our house, where my brothers and I used to play if the weather was wet, and, scrounging round in this garret, we came across a bit of old mouldy pie-crust we had evidently left there some other time, and didn't it seem good as we wiped the mould off and shared the bit between us! We were hungry or we should have passed the mouldy bit by. It was the time also when we had porridge to breakfast, porridge to dinner and porridge to tea, until my father got another warp in and could earn some more food. I can remember later on turning up my nose at porridge. Mother thought it was stupidity; probably it was that, and nausea. In those days it wasn't porridge followed by something else. It was porridge warm, porridge cold, porridge with milk or with treacle, and sometimes porridge and point, that is, you had the hole in the centre of the basin of porridge and you pointed to where the milk or treacle should be. Generally speaking, we did have food plain and good. Folks lived differently in those days. Nowadays they have porridge followed by bacon and eggs or something tasty if they have breakfast at home. Then it was the simple life in food to excess.

When I was about five years old they had me christened. We lived a mile away from the chapel, but owing to the distance away they had a little school for our hamlet, where the parson came to speak on occasional Sunday afternoons. One Sunday afternoon a number of children were taken to be christened. I had been breeched that day. Children—boys—were not put into suits so soon then as now. We wore petticoats until we lads were ready for going to school, and some were even older than I when they got into breeches. I like 'em best now, where at about one year old they put them into "woollies", then at about two into suits, and give them breeches and coats with pockets in. They took us down to this branch Sunday school to be christened. As there was no font, the parson had to make a basin of water do. I can see him come down from the desk, which did duty as a pulpit, towards me with this basin, and as he said his "nominny" he sprinkled the water over my face. Little rebel that I was, I know I didn't like it, and with my new handkerchief taken from the pocket of my new first suit, I wiped it off before he had finished. They held my hands then until he had done it completely, and I guess I am christened fully, even if not as good a Christian as I should be! I don't know much about the value of christening, but it is part of a religious service and carries with it certain faiths and understandings, but I am certain the old stories that if people were not christened they went to hell have not much value to-day.

The first day school I attended was known as a "dame school." It was a one-roomed barn-like place, with an iron stove in the middle and hard

forms without backs for us youngsters to sit on. The little children were at one end of the room and the older ones at the other. We paid school pence for our training, and the old lady taught us the A B C etc., but not much more. She was a tall, gaunt-looking, but as far as I can remember, kindly lady. Her type went out when the Education Acts came along in the 'seventies. I had learnt my alphabet, however, before going to school, for my mother and father taught us. My father was a very good reader, yet when he was twenty-one he couldn't read a line. He never went to school, he never could write more than his name, but he learnt to read, and read excellently, at the old village cobbler's shop, where they took in radical and other papers.

From this school I went to a fully-equipped National School. I learnt to do sums there, to know a bit about geography. It was a Church School, and every day the Vicar used to come and give us Bible reading. I read the Bible through twice in my school days, right from Genesis to Revelations. Some of it was "dree" stuff, the chronological parts particularly, but we had it to do. We had one full hour's Bible reading when on the morning turn at school, and a lesser time when we were on the afternoon shift at school.

It's a lot different now, and I thank those who made it better by their agitation in freeing young folks from mill thralldom before they are fourteen and from scholastic limitations such as existed fifty years ago. We had not as many, nor the sort of reading books there are to-day. When we had any books at all, copy books, etc., we had them to buy. School pence rose to 4d. per week,

and it was often a task for the mothers to find the money, and, lad-like, if it wasn't there, we stayed away. There was no school board "bobby" either, but the schoolmaster would send a note, or the Vicar would call, and excuses and apologies—or thrashings if it was truancy—followed.

There were hardships and joys mixed. Our parents were good souls, and liked us to have educative enjoyment, and several times I was lucky enough to get to high-class concerts given by notable Yorkshire singers. At the mill where my father worked they would raffle a few of the sixpenny tickets and in that way I went with him to hear Mrs. Sunderland, the Yorkshire Queen of Song, and other notables of that day.

In the winter months, from about nine years old until I was thirteen, we would have our small troupe of lads doing our Christmas sketches. There would be five or six of us lads, ranging in age from nine to fourteen, assemble in one another's homes or in one of the coal or other outhouses, and with the aid of candles do our rehearsals. The usual set piece was "St. George and the Dragon," and as the characters were more numerous than our troupe, I took two of them. It was grand to dress up in old clothes, with tin swords, brooms and shovels as implements, and we enjoyed it whether our listeners did or not.

The characters were the Fool, St. George, Slasher, the Doctor, Prince of Paladine, the King of Egypt, Hector, Beelzebub and Devil Doubt. I could do any of them, but I was usually the Doctor and little Devil Doubt.

Slasher and St. George fight, and Slasher says :

"How can'st thou break my head,  
 Since it is made of iron,  
 And my body's made of steel,  
 My hands and feet of knuckle bone,  
 I challenge thee to yield."

St. George wounds Slasher and the Fool is sent to bring in the Doctor, and the dialogue is :

DOCTOR : Here am I.

FOOL : Are you the Doctor ?

DOCTOR : Yes, that you may plainly see by my art and activity.

FOOL : Well, what's your fee to cure this man ?

DOCTOR : Ten pounds is my fee, but, Jack, ■ thou be an honest man I'll only take five of thee.

FOOL (*aside*) : You'll be wondrous canny if you get any. Well, how far have you handled in doctorship ?

DOCTOR : From Italy, Titaly, High Germany, France and Spain, and now am returned to cure the disease in Old England again.

FOOL : So far and no farther.

DOCTOR : Oh, yes, a great deal farther.

FOOL : How far ?

DOCTOR : From the fireside, cupboard, upstairs and into bed.

FOOL : What diseases can you cure ?

DOCTOR : All sorts.

FOOL : What's all sorts ?

DOCTOR : The itch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout. If a man gets nineteen devils in his skull I cast twenty of them out. I cured Sir Harry of a nangnail almost 55 yards long. Surely I can cure this poor man. Here, Jack, take a little out of my bottle and let it run down thy throttle. If thou be not quite slain, rise, Jack, and fight again.

Silly, perhaps, but very enjoyable.

There were one or two of us who would give special recitations or songs. My songs included, "Just before the Battle, Mother," and "Cheer, Boys, Cheer." My recitations were Sam Laycock's "The Bellman," Edwin Waugh's "Owd Time is



a Troublesome Codge," John Hartley's "Duffin' Johnny," and Ben Preston's "Come to thi Gronny Doy."

Our turns would take about one hour at each place. Our chief one was the village public-house, where we would attend on several occasions. The others were in neighbours' houses, farm-houses near to, and we would attend in the season about thirty houses, including the kitchens of two well-to-do folks' houses. One season, when we shared up, we had 1s. 4d. apiece, but as we had each drawn a bit on account, the final share out was fourpence apiece. It was ■ glorious adventurous time, going out with a lantern to ■ remote farmer's house and enjoying ourselves and being regaled with oranges, cheese, cakes, etc.

## CHAPTER II

### OLD TIME SONGS

As a lad, one strange bit of reading fell to my lot. My father got weekly *Reynolds's Newspaper* and Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*. My mother bought Spurgeon's Sermons, and for practice I suppose they had me reading from them aloud to the neighbours who came in to learn what was in papers or in the sermons. I didn't always like it, but it did me good. It was not all politics; there was poetry and song.

Whoever hears Charles Swain's "Aladdin's Lamp" sung now? We never do, and even if I give a quotation from it, folks don't know it. Yet Swain was a poet—a minor poet, maybe—who sang for his day and generation. My Dad used to warble it for us on the hearthstone or at socials, at the Feast and at Christmas.

" Oh, had I but Aladdin's lamp,  
Though only for a day,  
I'd try to find a link to bind  
The joys that pass away.  
I'd try to bring an angel's wing  
Upon the earth again,  
And build true worth a throne on earth—  
A throne beloved by men.  
It should be May and always May,  
I'd wreath the world with flower,  
I'd robe the barren wilderness  
And bring life happy hours."

My father would delight us with excerpts from the poems of the Cotton Spinner Poet of Mid-Victorian days—J. Critchley Prince—especially one termed “An Epistle to a Brother Poet.”

“In man I love all that is noble and great,  
But war and oppression and falsehood I hate,  
And oft has my spirit burst forth into song  
Against every species of riot and wrong.  
I'm a pleader for freedom in every form :  
For my country I feel patriotic and warm ;  
Yet still I've no wish to disorder the land  
With the flame of the torch and the flash of the brand.  
I'm for measures more gentle, more certain in sooth,  
The movement of morals, the triumph of truth ;  
And my hopes are that men who are toiling and grieving  
Will make this fair earth the heaven they believe in.  
My religion is love—'tis the noblest and purest,  
And my temple the universe—widest and surest ;  
I worship my God through His works which are fair,  
And the joy of my thoughts is perpetual prayer.”

In a further passage of the same poem my Dad would thunder forth :

“Did God set His fountains of light in the skies  
That man should look up with tears in his eyes ?  
Did God make this world so abundant and fair  
That man should look down with a groan of despair ?  
Did God fill this world with harmonious life  
That man should go forth with destruction and strife ?  
Did God scatter freedom o'er mountain and wave  
That man should exist as a tyrant and slave ?  
Away with so hopeless, so joyless a creed,  
For the soul that believes it is darkened indeed.”

My father was a follower of Ernest Jones, the Radical Chartist poet, writer and lecturer, and would sing us Ernest Jones' “Chartist Hymn” :

" We plow and sow, we're so very low  
That we delve in the dirty clay;  
Till we bless the plain with the golden grain,  
And the vale with the fragrant hay.  
Our place we know—we're so very, very low—  
'Tis down at the landlord's feet.  
We're not too low the grain to grow,  
But too low the bread to eat."

Treasonable sentiments like these just suited him and he would sing this verse with gusto :

" We're low, we're low, we're very, very low,  
And yet from our fingers glide  
The silken flow and the robes that glow  
Round the limbs of the sons of pride;  
And what we get and what we give  
We know and we know our share;  
We're not too low the cloth to weave,  
But too low the cloth to wear."

Another of Swain's we used to sing at home as a kind of glee was one beginning :

" Oh, what a world it might be,"

winding up with :

" Oh, what a world of beauty  
A loving heart might plan,  
If man but did his duty  
By helping brother man."

I suppose this may be looked upon as too sentimental by the young folks to-day—too sloppy, too common—but I am old-fashioned, and still like common-sense sentimentality—something that isn't too deep to understand, something not too high to be above me, and yet something that

touches the chords of love and life as many of these old songs did. I haven't yet got the education to understand the best, but I know what I like and I like Swain and many others, and after having tried a dose of the great masters, these bring me down to earth. Some of the songs now given us on the music-hall stage are not to be compared with the old-timers of Harry Russell, Charles Mackay, Harry Liston and others of the underpaid music-hall artists of those days. Perhaps the music was drawlish and the tunes somewhat insipid, but, good Lord! the hop and jump kind of music served out by the artists from America and imitated here isn't half as soothing. It's too rackety, or else I am too old-fashioned. I like a grand singer at a music-hall, and he or she, if good, usually gets bigger, more lasting applause, and does one more good than the "fliff, faffing" stuff ladled out with bowing and scraping, twisting and twining, like many of them try on, and just compensate for their appearance by a really clever bit of dancing.

The old sentimental songs were good, if commonplace. They touched the spot, they pointed a moral, they didn't have double-sided meanings or grating references to your own or somebody else's wife. They were fit for women and children to hear, and nothing ever written or sung that isn't fit for them to hear, isn't fit for ■ man to hear either. I am as old-fashioned as that.

Localized or Yorkshire sentimental songs were sung on many a hearthstone, in many a public-house, music-hall or homely social gathering. My dad used to sing one called "Ben Hobson's Advice to his Sons."

" Ben Hobson sat before the fire, and puffed his bacca smook,  
The picture of a good old sire to give and take a joke ;  
He'd puff away, look wisely round, then wink'd at Dick and  
Dan,  
Just like a mortal, wisdom crowned, then to his sons began :  
' My bonny lads, you've just arrived at th' world's un-  
certain age,  
And with my tongue I'll just contrive the lesson of a sage,  
Take all th' advice that you can get, turn not your head away,  
Don't let folks put you in a pet with anything they say."

Another old bit was with a very drawling tune,  
or lack of one.

" When a child I lived at Lincoln with my parents at the farm,  
The lessons that my mother taught to me were quite a  
charm ;  
She used to take me on her knee when tired of childish  
play,  
And as she pressed me to her breast I've heard my mother  
say :  
' Waste not, want not ' is a maxim I would teach,  
And let your watchword be ' dispatch,' and practise what  
you preach,  
Then do not let your chances like the sunbeams pass you by,  
For you'll never miss the water till the well runs dry."

One of my own favourite songs as a lad and young  
man, in addition to the " Farmer's Boy " (which  
I have sung in pub and club hundreds of times)  
was an old North Country ditty, as follows :

" When ah had wark and brass to spend,  
Ah niver wanted for a friend ;  
Foaks coom a camping ivery neet,  
And moved at me when we met i' th' street.  
Mi company wor coorted then  
Bi business chaps and gentlemen,  
Ah cahnted comrades bi the score  
But na ah've none since ah gat poor,

Ah'd invitations ivery day,  
 To dine or sup or tak mi tay,  
 Or goa an' have a friendly chat  
 Wi' Mr. this, or Mrs. that;  
 An' t' squire o' consequence to boot,  
 Wood ask me o'er to fish an' shoot,  
 Wi' dog an' gun o'er dale an' moor,  
 But nah that's changed since ah gat poor.

Then Scotchmen bothered me wi' goods,  
 Wi' tongues as smooth as soft soap suds,  
 Mi patronage, they strove to get it,  
 Wi' yards o' cloth an' years o' credit,  
 But nah, they've changed ther tune bi't' mass,  
 They come hawking tay for ready brass,  
 They can't see t'number on mi door,  
 They've got so blind since ah gat poor.

An' what maks me feel varey fow'  
 Mi kinfolks doesna know me now,  
 Stuck up wi' pride to sich a pitch,  
 Aw'v nooa relations but what's rich,  
 An even my own brother, Jim  
 He says I'm nowt akin to him,  
 You may live o'th air or lig o'th floor,  
 It's good enough for those 'ats poor."

I am sure my readers will see from these quotations what a helpful radicalism was breathed into my life from my untutored, unlettered father.

I could read dialect writings very early. My father loved the old writers and old singers. I read as a lad not yet in my teens Edwin Waugh's "Besom Ben," "Come whom to thi childur an' me," Sam Laycock's "Bonny Brid," "Bowton's Yard," etc., John Hartley's "Bite Bigger," etc., Ben Brearley's Journal and his "Ab' o' th' Yate," sketches, and also, of course, the "Boys of London and New York," and other of Bretts' publications.

My father was a delightful singer of old songs.

He would stand with his back to the fire on ■ winter's evening and give us Burns' "When Wintry Winds and Slaughtering Guns." He brought us home penny broadsheets of the old writers, and I remember with delight getting from one of my grandparents a small volume of Johnson's Dictionary, and got even amusement and probably some knowledge out of this "thumb-smear'd" book.

We got music lessons also from an old handloom weaver, who—self-taught—could play many instruments, and who conducted the then famous Meltham Brass Band, and the famous Holmfirth Bell-ringers. My older brother and I would do the old duets, "All's Well," "Larboard Watch," "Minute Gun at Sea," etc. I learnt many recitations, and at the mill would, as a half-timer, and later on as a full-timer, always have something to read, something to learn by heart, and many an hour's pleasure or otherwise would be our lot at home, where home-made enjoyment was the order of the day. I enjoy reading dialect and other writings as much to-day or more so than I did fifty years ago. I must have been a fair reader, for I remember one hard winter we couldn't be taken from Sunday School to the chapel nearly a mile away owing to the thick snow, and they put me into the superintendent's desk to read the Scriptures for that day.

What delightful songs and choruses I heard in those days! At the village pub where my father used to call on a Saturday night, I have heard him sing song after song. I also heard him sing them at home, and when he lived with us as he did for the last few years before he died, he has delighted my children and many a visitor by



singing, amongst others, Dan Bedford Leno's song :—

" Give me the spade and the man that can use it,  
A fig for your lord with his soft silken hand,  
Let the man that has strength never stoop to abuse it,  
Give it back to the giver, the land, boys, the land.  
There's no bank like the earth to deposit your treasure,  
The more you deposit and the more you shall have,  
If you've more than you want, then give to a neighbour,  
And your name shall be blessed by the free and the brave."

I think I have heard that the famous Drury Lane comedian, Dan Leno, was a son of the writer of the noted song " Give me the Spade."

I begun to work for my Aunt Alice, when I was nine and a half years of age. She and her husband were hand-loom weavers, having a large weaving chamber holding two hand-looms—broad hand-looms—a hand bobbin winding wheel and a healding frame. There were also two beds in the chamber in addition. She was a good soul. My uncle was one of the old stock who loved his glass of whiskey, but who enjoyed it by his own fireside and occasionally he would become a bit cranky or merry, by having a whiskey or two, too many. My job was to reach the threads in when my aunt was healding the warp ready for it being woven. It was an easy job but a bit boring, especially on a hot summer's day, and a lad of nine was liable to get drowsy. When that happened a tap on the shins from her foot would be the awakener. My first wage for a full day's labour was three-pence for my mother, a halfpenny for myself, and a new-baked, currant tea cake to eat on my way home. Wasn't I "chuff" when I could swank home with a bit of wage ! The pocket money was welcome, for in a country village a half-

penny to spend was a mint of money to a lad of nine in those days.

I also helped to serve the pigs at a local farmhouse, and got rewarded, sometimes, with potatoes, sometimes with turnips, and often some skim milk which mother would use for baking, etc.

I also helped another old hand-loom weaver when he was drying his warp in the country lanes. All this system is done away with, but the old, country hand-loom weaver would have his warp sized, then he would get about forty poles, eighty inches long, stick one end into the wall on the lane side, and, with the poles a few feet apart, stretch his warp over them and dry it with the sun and the air, and also dress the warp by having each set of four or more ends drawn through a "raddle" and from there, put it on to a beam or roller and then take it into the loom ready for weaving. A lad's job was to help run the "raddle," and do anything the hand-loom weaver told him to do.

I remember this old hand-loom weaver very well. He kept a couple of donkeys. They would do nearly anything for him, and if donkeys can love, they loved the old man. We took them potato peelings and other things at times, because, whilst they were not the "lads of the village," they were at least the "donkeys of this hamlet" of about twelve houses. I remember when the two donkeys died there were lamentations in the old man's home as well as sorrow expressed in the place. There was a public funeral in a little disused quarry a few dozen yards behind our house. We all went to the funeral. The old man said, as they filled the graves up :—

"Ashes to ashes,  
Dust to dust,

■ God won't have you  
The Devil must.

The male folks also went and had their usual "burying gathering" at a pub about a quarter of a mile away.

The day I was ten years of age, I went into the mill as a half-timer. I had several jobs, one being to squeeze the wobbly sizing into small bits—a nauseating job—another to put sticks into a big balloon used for drying the warps upon, and a third to reach ends in for the warper, ready for the warp to be taken into the loom.

We had to go to school one half-day and the mill the other half-day. One week we started work at 6 a.m. and went on until 12.30 p.m., with a half-hour for breakfast. We then had to go to school from 2 to 4.30 p.m. The opposite week we went to school at 9 a.m. until 12 noon, and to work at from 1.30 until 6 p.m. It was a bit cruel at times—when on the morning turn at the mill—for it meant being up at 5 a.m. getting a drop of something warm, and trudging off to the mill a mile away to begin work. In winter, it was fearful. Of course, it was customary, and we didn't think there was anything wrong about it.

We had to take a book to school and to the mill, in which was recorded our school attendance. It was ■ somewhat perfunctory business, but it was part of the law.

We had also to be "passed" by the Factory Surgeon, as fit to be at work. This was not a fearsome job such as one imagined before being examined. With some other half-time lads I travelled about two miles to see the Factory Surgeon. We had to roll up our sleeves and show our vaccination marks. Then he just glanced at

our teeth. I remember him saying to me, "Ah lad, but you're a little un," to which I responded—not wanting to be turned down—"Yus, but ah'm a good 'un."

I remember having my first and last bacca-chewing experience at this mill. The man over me at the mill, chewed "Lady's Twist"—a long, thin tobacco. One day he had left a length of un-chewed tobacco on the frame, and, foolishly lad-like, I got a bit and began to chew it. Soon the mill went round. My father, who wove in a loom-gate close by, noticing me changing colour, asked me if I was poorly, and I was. He saw the foreman, who allowed me to go home. When I got into the fresh air, I soon recovered, but said nothing to anybody. I didn't know anybody had seen me chewing, but the day following an uncle of mine said "That bacca wasn't so good, Ben." I kept quiet, but haven't had a chew since that day, well over fifty years ago, and am too old to start now.

I remember another incident at this mill that I "duffed" at. The firm were strong Nonconformist Liberals, and for the 1874 election they had bought a splendid new flag to put out in honour of their side. A strong wind blew a tassel off. They thought, no doubt, that I was the brave kind of lad to go through the skylight and creep down to the edge of the roof to fetch it out. I wasn't. They tied a rope round my body, put me through the skylight, but, remembering there was a five-storey fall into a little brook well, I wouldn't go, and they couldn't make me. It was at this mill that the first serious mill accident that I saw, happened. A woman—the wife of a foreman—went into a part of the mill to see some of

the new machinery, and her fingers got caught and taken off. It caused a great commotion in the mill for a few days.

We used to draw our wages fortnightly. I had a half-crown a week, but drew it every two weeks. It looked more, no doubt, to draw five shillings at once than two half-crowns at two separate times. Fortnightly pays were part of an old system that has practically died out now, in the textile trade anyhow.

On Christmas Eve, the firm had us to sing Christmas hymns in the warehouse, after which the lads got a new threepenny bit, the female adults sixpence, and the male adults a shilling.

Lads, in those days, hadn't to be idle. They went to school or to mill, or to both, and at home well-brought-up lads would help in some of the household tasks. I had the knives, forks and spoons to clean each week-end. Sometimes, I had to blacklead the fireplace, polish the steel fender, rub up the fire-irons, wash the long door-stones, or, as was more usual, "swill" them clean every Friday night or Saturday noon. We had to be generally useful. It didn't hurt us. Many a time we wanted to play, and sometimes we thought they were "lasses'" and not "lads'" jobs, but it would be well if all lads were taught to do some household jobs, for it comes in so useful in after life, when a man has to or should help his wife in some of the harder of the household tasks. I can wash up, make a meal, sweep a room, make the beds, or do any of the ordinary tasks in the household. I don't do it often now, but it has in the past been a help to my wife in times of sickness or domestic difficulty. I commend the learning of some of these household duties to all lads and

young men. It's as good as going to the pictures, but their mothers must not over-drive them to it.

As a half-timer, I had to be up at 5 in the morning, get a "treacleshive," i.e., a slice of bread with treacle on it, and bundle off to my work, to be at the mill before six. It is a well-known fact that the farther folks live away from their work the better time-keepers they are. I used to be at the mill at least ten minutes before starting time.

In winter we would creep into the boiler house, "the firing hoil" as it was called, warm our frozen hands a bit and be in to work just on the stroke of six. We used to take our tea or coffee to the mills ready-made. Usually unsweetened tea was got ready for us by our mothers the night before, and the little can was either placed on top of the hot water boiler to warm up, or we would take it into the die vats and hold it over the boiling liquid until it had become hot.

Putting up the meals at home the night before, was a big feature. I used to take one and sometimes one and a half teacakes for my breakfast. This would be wrapped up in a red handkerchief and with this under my arm and the can of tea in the other hand, I wended my way to the mill.

My father would have both his breakfast and dinner put up for the day. Sometimes it would be bacon and bread, sometimes a potato pie, some rare times a "meat and potato pie," and if it could be managed, once a week, dinner would be taken to him, usually on a Thursday, consisting of Yorkshire pudding, vegetables and liver-fry as we called it.

Killing day at the butcher's was late on Wednesday night, and two, three or four pennyworth of fry was the customary purchase at the butcher's by lots of folks in the village.

Dumpling day was rare, because these didn't warm up well, and yet I have known it be dumpings and fry on ■ Thursday if there was someone certain to take the dinner-basket to the mill. Before I was a half-timer, I have gone quickly from school, taken the dinner basket packed with meals for my father, brother and sister. The final words from my mother would be "run and hold the basket steady." Sometimes it would run over, and then my father would say gently, "Whativvur has ta been doing, lad ; it's nearly all run away."

Bedlam day was an event in itself. It came when a neighbour had a pig killed and the other neighbours called with a penny and had a bit of bedlam (fry, liver, etc.), with some of the blood for a blood pudding.

It is true that children enjoy themselves just as well to-day, but maybe in a different way. There were no "pictures" or cinemas—no exciting lectures or treats. True, we had Sunday School Anniversaries, we had a Sunday sing, we had our Whitsuntide School Feasts. There was also the Annual Flower Show and occasionally a big circus came. I remember the famous "Bosco" coming one time, with riders on four, six and eight horses, women riding and jumping through flaming rings, bare-backed riders, trapeze men, and, above all, a bit of conjuring. The thing that made me hold my breath was the girl standing against a board, and "Bosco" himself sending knives into the wood until he had encircled her neck.

Of course, I played about a bit like other lads. We played football, usually with a bladder begged from the local butcher, blown up and covered over, and kicked here and there without any goal-posts at all. We played cricket with home-made bats,

and balls made with twine, and our wickets would be a stone reared up. I saw a bit of pigeon flying from cote to cote, some bits of gambling, and certainly there were silly things done that are not creditable.

I have recollections of gossipy afternoons and evenings now and then when my aunts and neighbours would call and have their "drinking," as tea was termed, and after they had supped and eaten, the long clay pipes would come out and the shag tobacco, and a real "pow-wow" would take place. "Little pigs have long ears," as the saying is, and some of the gossip wasn't for us to hear. If they caught us youngsters listening, mother or someone else would chip and say that children should be seen and not heard.

What a big change there has been from those old days! Now, cigarette smoking with women is common—far too common, I think—and the women's dress of the period has undergone a big transformation. The old flannel petticoats idea has departed. The chignon has given way to the beautiful bobbed hair. The long flounces and long skirts have given way to short skirts and silk stockings. The clogs and shawls of everyday use have given way to hats and jackets and costumes.

There is very little home-brewed beer now—the healthy home-brewed which every good housewife knew how to brew, that quenched a thirst and left the person drinking it sober and sensible. The Gladstone Tax or beer licence placed on cottage houses stopped that, and to-day we have beer light or dark, thin or thick, but, generally speaking, a chemical substitute that does no good to anybody. Most changes are for the better; only a few we could have done without.



We lived at times in fear, for there would be ghost stories told and rumours would get round, of "Breakfast Mary" being about (a phantom going along stealing breakfasts from lads and lasses going to their work), and for nippers going to work in the early dark mornings it troubled us a bit, and I was as frightened as the rest of them.

Looking back at my first thirteen years, I can't see much to complain about. We had sicknesses, the doctor was often with us, the shop-book was always with us, and yet my mother always contrived to keep a roof over our heads and to have us neat and tidy. She was a good sewer, and when we got a sewing machine at so much a week and "missings" (i.e. paying one week and missing the collector the next) it was as if we had become luxurious all at once. She earned by her sewing what helped her to pay for it, besides making our clothes, both for my brothers, sister and our father. She was a good 'un, bless her.

My first glimpse of a strike was in Holmfirth in 1872, when I was nine years of age. My father was one of the strikers, and a Union Committee man as well. The weavers wanted a uniform weavers' piece rate scale applying at each mill. The employers opposed it, and for eleven weeks ■ dispute raged. I went and watched the processions of strikers as they marched round the district or went the six miles' walk to the mills at Huddersfield. The dispute pay was four shillings per week, and my mother had to allocate so much bread per day for the seven of us, and often we were hungry. Sometimes my aunt would give us a "buttershive" or a "treacleshive" (i.e. a slice of bread with butter or treacle upon it), and these were looked upon as gifts from Heaven. At times

we could get a turnip or some big potatoes. We had porridge so often that I got nauseated with it. Another aunt gave my mother some dripping, but it had gone "reezed" (rancid), and I turned against dripping for many a year afterwards. The weavers won the dispute, but it carried much heartbreaking in certain shopkeeping circles. My shopkeeping uncle was very bitter with my father for standing with his class. There was only one mill where there were any blacklegs, and on the whole it was a peaceable dispute.

Another period of hardship that I remember was when trade was so bad that my father "played" (waiting for material) for work—not for a situation—for weeks at a stretch, and he and his brother were driven to go and do a bit of quarrying one time, and it made us children weep to see my father's bleeding hands. He also did a bit of stone-breaking for the roads to wipe off his rates.

Another time we had no coal, and he and some others went peat-cutting on the moors, the Yorkshire side of "Bills o' Jacks." Still, as a lad, we got a bit of what there was, for no children had more loving parents than we.

The day I was thirteen years of age I left school. I must not have been much of a duffer for I remember we had a prize-giving that day, and they gave me a certificate for freehand drawing.

It was of course time to leave school, for I had got into the top standard and been put to do gardening and other things on some half days because the top standard was Standard V and we couldn't go beyond it. I will say I liked school and am glad children now go longer than we did then, and also learn a lot more than we had a chance to do.

I began to work full time and got my five shillings per week paid once per fortnight.

To take a golden half-sovereign to my mother was great joy to me as a lad—perhaps it was also a joy due to the fact that my spending money was raised from one penny a week to twopence.

Silly young fool that I was, I spent one week's spending money on a half-ounce of tobacco and clay pipe and after puffing away for a while hid my pipe in the garden wall.

Thank goodness, somebody—perhaps my father—found it and took it and I didn't smoke again until I was twenty years of age.

Trade was very bad at this period and my father had to go further afield to find work and got a situation at Huddersfield. He had to lodge away from home and it was soon decided we should "flit" (remove) and after a few weeks he procured a house at Huddersfield, and on Good Friday fifty-two years ago we made the big change from small hamlet to a busy town.

## CHAPTER III

### FROM VILLAGE TO TOWN

FROM village life to town life is a great change—I had never been on a train before I was thirteen. I had been to Huddersfield once in a waggon one Whit-Tuesday to a Band of Hope gathering. It was therefore a new adventure for me to go from a little place of one hundred folks to a big place with thousands.

My brother and myself were lucky enough to find a new place to work at. He began work at twelve shillings and I at nine shillings per week. This was a big increase on the nine shillings and five shillings we had been getting before. My father had also got a good place to work at, and if it hadn't been for the shop book debts, etc., we might have been fairly well to do as a working-class household. I was fortunate to become a piecener in a woollen mulegate, and whilst the head spinner and his sons were mighty keen at their job, they were good workers, and the material being good to spin, it wasn't any harder than the job I had left.

Here I got my first dash of vegetarianism. One of the foreman's sons—a young fellow about three years or so older than I—led me to try to be a vegetarian. It lasted with me six weeks, for as a

growing lad I was running about a mulegate for ten and a half hours a day. The rice pudding I tried to make do for my midday meal was done by three o'clock, and I became as hungry as a hunter by that time, so I gave it up. It was harder to be a vegetarian then than now, for there were not the fancy dishes and different sorts of foods there are to-day. A worker's usual meals were, for breakfast, bread and drip or bread and butter, or a big currant tea-cake or a big carraway seed cake. They were none of your puny little cakes of to-day, but big round things that were home-baked, and many a time in later days I did two of them to my breakfast. The baking day at home was always Thursday. It is a regular day in Yorkshire and at our house yet, and my mother, in those times, used to bake three stones of bread to last the week. Fancy cakes and dainties were not needed; the home-baked bread was good enough. Bacon and eggs, etc., were not common. If we had an egg, it was to our Sunday breakfast. In summer, we might take spring onions, or some lettuce or other greens like watercress, but generally nothing but bread and tea or coffee.

For dinner-time—the midday meal—we would have, on a Monday, a bit of cold meat; on Tuesday a hash, on Wednesday a potato pie, on Thursday some fry and onions, on Friday a bit of potted meat, on Saturday a bit of sausage, and on Sunday the usual joint, always providing the funds ran to it.

For our teas it was again bread and drip or bread and butter, or sometimes a Spanish onion or some "craps" (pork fat made crisp), and on Sunday teatime, a bit of special home-made cake to make the distinction from the other days. At

the worst times our cut of beef was brisket, because it went the farthest, and made the most "drip," besides being the cheapest cut. We did try frozen mutton for a time, but in those days you couldn't afford two joints a week, and frozen mutton wouldn't warm up very well and was hardly fit to be taken to the mill for dinners. I suppose science has improved the foreign meat, and it can be treated differently from then. Refrigerators were unknown in those times.

My whole outlook was changed by our removal from village to town. I had been a good Sunday school scholar in the orthodox sense of the word in the village, but my father had other notions when we got to Huddersfield, and he took my two brothers and myself to become Sunday school scholars at its noted Secular Sunday School. This was a great adventure, and it did me a world of good. They had two sessions each Sunday, at which we were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, elocution, singing, etc. Sometimes there was no school in the afternoons, and noted Secular lecturers came and gave afternoon and evening addresses. It was there I heard Annie Besant, George Jacob Holyoake, Harriet Law, Charles Watts, Dr. Aveling, and many others whose names slip from my memory. I heard Bradlaugh several times; he was a big draw, and they used to engage a big hall for his visit and folks would walk miles to hear him. These secularists didn't always lecture on Secularism. Many of their addresses were on social subjects like the land question, perpetual pensions, republicanism, home rule, etc., and I learnt a bit about many subjects, but more still, I learnt how to learn about these things. Anti-religion didn't enter much into it,

but we were not orthodox religionists, and our workmates, etc., were always running us down as young infidels.

It was at this school, through its elocution and singing classes, that I got my further stimulus in reading. I learnt scores of recitations, took part in many little plays, and we had our own debates, when we thrashed things out rudely and crudely, but, by jove! it was rich life for young fellows like me, from fifteen to nineteen years of age.

At eighteen I became Secretary of this Sunday School, and had even begun to take the chair for the lesser lights that turned up or for the social evenings we arranged. It was the time when young folks did a bit of rhyming, and one bit I inflicted upon them was about Thomas Paine. I am glad nobody has a copy of it, for I know it was poor stuff, but it did me no harm, and certainly it kept me alive to events of the day, for it made us read the newspapers and know about the politics of the time.

The *Leeds Mercury* was a famous Whig paper. The *Manchester Examiner and Times*, with the writings of Verax, was much to the front. Gladstone and Disraeli were the two famous figures in Parliament, Bright was the peace man and Salisbury was in the picture also, but the man whose politics we admired as well as the elections he fought, was Charles Bradlaugh. What a giant he was! He was the working man's orator. He could flay an opponent into patches. Sometimes he was too keen to be kind enough with an opponent, but he inspired us, especially in his political addresses. He became a modest politician in his later days, and after he conquered Parliament it conquered him. He was a strong man outside

Parliament and a bigger propagandist than Parliamentarian. Annie Besant was the great woman speaker of the time. A few years ago I was privileged to speak five minutes at the Queen's Hall, London, on the occasion of her fifty years' public career. I shewed her the hymn book she compiled in those days with one or two of her own effusions. It is one of the little hymn books I prize to-day, for old times' sake. She was and is the finest woman speaker I have ever heard, and I have heard most of the big guns of the world.

Besides going to the Sunday School, we would have an elocution or singing class once a week but I also went to the old Mechanics' Institute Night School to learn a bit more there. The Mechanics' Institutes were great helps to young men. They have been succeeded by technical schools and technical colleges, but they gave the young folks of those days a grip of education, and whilst we had to start work at 6 a.m. and work until 6 p.m., we managed to put in two nights a week at the Mechanics' as well. It was another form or wider form of education one got. I wish most of our young men and women from fifteen to twenty would spend more time at the Technical Schools and the adult classes fixed up by the Workers' Educational Association. It would do them good. It is better than wasting one's time in billiard halls or worse places. I am not wanting them to spend all their time reading and studying, but I don't want them to spend all their time on sport or play. Life is too rich for that.

I became a bookworm in those days and still have that propensity. Perhaps I wasn't as sound a reader as I should have been, yet I read a lot and



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I became a bookworm in those days and still have that propensity. Perhaps I wasn't as sound a reader as I should have been, yet I read a lot and

lost a lot. There is more reading now than ever before, and whilst I sometimes wish they would read more leading articles and less tipping news, yet with a syndicated press some of the tips are as good as some of the leading articles. The best morning papers, the old-time morning papers, give us yet great leaders. *The Yorkshire Post*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Scotsman*, *The Glasgow Herald*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily News*, *The Daily Chronicle*, *The Daily Herald*, and many other give us non-political leading articles that provide us with life and fire and knowledge and understanding. That is what a leading article should do. When I was a young fellow, the leaders in *The Mercury*, *The Newcastle Chronicle*, the now dead *Examiner and Times*, and even the local weeklies, gave us literature, art, science, romance and political leaders that were not as saucy or as derelict of vision as some leaders in some of the wilder papers are to-day. From *Reynolds's* we had Gracchus and Northumbrian, and later W. M. Thompson and Morrison Davidson, who gave us hot politics and the history of men and movements that certainly did me good.

About that time I also began to write Labour notes for a radical newspaper run by a working printer. I was accustomed to write more strongly than I would to-day, yet there are many of the paragraphs I could make even stronger. One of my cutting books contains the following :—

"It is stated that there are engaged in the Textile Trades, 1886, 786,000 persons, and it is asserted that the amount of overtime they work would allow 42,300 persons to be employed. Is it fair or honest on the part of those who do work overtime to do so when there are thousands of industrious men out of employment?"

I don't seem to have changed my views on such a subject these past forty years.

Another paragraph, in the January, 1887, issue, reads :—

"The unemployed in various parts of England are now directing their efforts to obtain consideration and notice of their poverty-stricken position by going to the churches in their various localities. Whether this new move will be of any service or not is questionable. Authorities care little for the poorer classes, though they are generally willing to increase the wages of their black cloth employees at any and all opportunities."

I had begun to be an occasional letter writer under a *nom de plume* to the local Liberal paper. One I see of March 30th, 1886, was headed "The Prevailing Distress and Socialism," in which I advised a critic to read works by William Morris, Mrs. Besant, Dr. Aveling, Rev. S. D. Headlam, etc. In the concluding part of it, I said, "But it behoves us to study how to change misery to brightness, want to plenty, injustice to justice, wrong to right, and I cannot see how we can separate these reforms from politics." It may sound like flapdoodle to-day, but it wasn't and it isn't. I still hold these views, and have those notions.

I just quote another bit on Trades Unionism. I had begun to be a regular short speaker for the Weavers' Union, and in one printed newspaper report from cutting books, I read as follows :—

"He contended that Trades Unions had an educational influence. They produced in working men habits of economy and self-respect, and taught justice to one and all. They also helped to secure social and political gain, promoted a keen sense of responsibility as citizens, and made co-operation between capital and labour more easy and

more fair. Combination was the only method whereby working men could secure social regeneration. He advised them to join the Weavers' Association, and to put on one side the petty jealousies and prejudices common amongst working men, and to weave Unity with Truth, and Truth with Liberty."

## CHAPTER IV

### CREDIT AND THRIFT

THE Shop Book used to be an institution in itself in my lad's days. It is less so now, due to Co-ops and multiple shops and more wages, yet it is still in force in some villages and in some of the poorer quarters of our towns. It is a system that has kept people from joining the Co-ops, yet it has helped people to pull along, especially those with small incomes or with large families of young children, but it keeps folks always poor. Of course, nearly all working class families are poor until they get one or more of the children working. Men's wages have seldom, if ever, been enough to keep the house equipped with food and raiment when there have been three to seven children. I know in our family, until somebody could bring in some wage to make the family income bigger, we could neither have food enough nor clothes enough. It breaks many a woman's heart and many a man's soul—the striving to keep free from debt or to get enough for the bairns something to eat before they start to work.

We had a Shop Book in my lad's days. The system of fortnightly pays helped to make it more needful to buy in on "strap" (credit). The last week's or last month's goods were paid or partly

paid for and the goods taken on credit entered into the shop book.

It is best to pay ready money—to buy nothing on credit—but I shouldn't have had a furnished house, when we begun housekeeping, if there hadn't been someone prepared to let me have credit. Many a time also my parents would have had no food for us young folks, if my uncle had not had a credit system or shop books. Of course, the shopkeepers made money by it. They had, of course, to charge more for the goods. The cash transactions were cheaper than the credit ones, and if a couple can, when starting life, keep free from the credit system, it is the best yet. I shouldn't have had a piano thirty years ago, if the credit system had not been in vogue. When it was bought I could just pay a pound down and then so much per week and missings, for with four children, to buy a piano with ready cash out of thirty-five shillings a week, was out of the question. It has paid for itself in pleasure, and before it was finally paid off, we had many nights of music and much family enjoyment from it. Still, whenever possible, pay ready money and especially for the foodstuffs and the clothes of life. There are keen shopkeepers who bite every customer they can. There are others who deal as justly as circumstances will permit them to. Real thrift is fine spending and prudent saving.

All men should look ahead and whilst not particularly successful, I have tried to remember my responsibilities, and early on in manhood I became a member of that great friendly society, the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows. It is a duty each man owes to himself and family to make provision for sickness and unforeseen, but possible

misfortunes, and accordingly, before marriage, I joined up.

All the great friendly societies have special forms and ceremonies. They have come down from the past, and have been simplified and dignified in their form and texture. I think the lecture read to a new member is a noble bit of literature. Our lecture in the Manchester Unity is in itself a sermon. It reads :—

“There are three general rules of duty which you, as an Oddfellow, ought always to inculcate and endeavour to illustrate by your personal conduct in your daily life. Your first is to God. . . . Your duty to yourself demands a careful avoidance of all intemperance and excess by which you might be rendered incapable of following your daily occupation, or led into a behaviour contrary to the spirit of our laws or unbecoming our laudable profession. . . . The duties of Oddfellowship will always teach you to stretch out your hand to a brother in distress ; to offer up your warmest petitions for his welfare ; to assist him with your best counsel and advice ; and to betray no confidence he may repose in you. . . . The man who would willingly exist upon the charity of others, rather than labour for his daily bread, by that very act forfeits his claim to our brotherly consideration. Neither the relief granted by the Society in sickness, nor the money paid upon the death of a member or his wife is to be regarded in the light of a charitable donation, but as the payment of a just claim, the honestly earned reward of the member's prudence and forethought. . . .

“It admits of nothing contrary to the allegiance we owe to the Sovereign of the Realm, or the duty we owe to ourselves and those dependent on us. Let sobriety and a strict attention to your domestic duties procure you the esteem of your friends and family so that by the example of your virtue, you will convince them Oddfellowship has a tendency to make those who enter amongst us better husbands, better fathers, and better members of Society.”

I am also a member of the “ Buffs.” This



making ceremony was more stage-like than that of the Oddfellows, and yet the addresses given by the various chiefs, the knights, etc., contained some of the most classical and New Testament idealism a man could hope for. Here we did have the brandished sword. Here we did have the "step that wasn't there" and stumble over it, etc. Buff lodges can be good or bad. Most are good. Some few have too many fines. There is, however, much social brotherhood in the best of Buff Lodges. As an old friend of mine puts it—

"Freemasonry is 'champagne and oysters,'  
Buffaloism is 'pop and cockles.'"

One is for the classes, the other is for the masses. I do not subscribe to that, but both, however, have been ■ real help to thousands of men out of work, on the road, etc. A few are imposed upon by glib-tongued impostors, but the system of "check" is a generally satisfactory one.

I urge all young men and women to get into their sick lodges or the sick sections of their Trades Unions, for whilst I know we have ■ State Sickness Scheme, it doesn't keep people from debt in time of sickness, nor does it do more than touch upon a side of the total needs when someone is ill. The people who are ill need double support. They get too little to secure this support. Things need reversing—the sick should have the double pay in place of next to nothing. Their need is biggest then.

## CHAPTER V

### POETRY AND POLITICS

EARLY in my adult life I mixed with older folks than myself and would trail miles to a lecture, to a concert or to hear a sermon by a famous preacher, and went, when I could, to the theatre, or music hall, etc. I spent many a threepence in the gallery of the old Huddersfield Theatre; one week I remember going three nights in succession, when the gallery price for this occasion had risen to sixpence. It was to see and hear J. L. Toole, who only did a three nights' tour in towns of that size. What a glorious memory it is to remember him creating laughter by his characterism in the "Artful Dodger" in "Ici on parle français," etc.! I have gone twice a week to see the famous actors of that day in Shakespearian plays. I once went to foreign opera, but not being cultivated up to it, and as I couldn't tell a word they said—not knowing Italian—well, I didn't go again.

I was very keenly interested in politics, and took up as a young fellow the side of the Home Rulers. I had read the life of James Stephen, known about Michael Davitt, read the poems of Davis and other songsters for Irish freedom, and generally was steeped in the atmosphere of the advanced or revolutionary period. All young fellows who are

active get into the rebellious group. It's a kind of healthy fever. That is why I never say much about the Communists in the country, or the Junior Imps in the Conservative ranks. I like young fellows—whatever their views—to have them and to hold them, but at the same time to be generous minded to the older folks and to have a spark of gratitude for the early pioneers of human progress. Toleration is a fine virtue in mankind, although we should never be tolerant with wrong doing. We should be just to the wrong-doers, helpful to the searcher after truth, patient with the earnest worker and not too superior to the young folks, as is sometimes patent with older folks, even in our own movement.

I remember how keen we young radicals were at times when noted politicians came down. Once when the noted Jimmy Lowther came to speak at Huddersfield Town Hall, a knot of us younger men sat in the centre of the Town Hall and when he was on with his speech he made some snarling reference to Gladstone and the Liberal Party, which we resented. Didn't we yell out "withdraw" and for a few minutes we kept it up. I wouldn't do it now. I believe in orderly meetings, and orderly conduct. It pays the best, but more than that it is right. An interjection may be all right, but deliberate stoppages of meetings and wilful obstruction are foreign to my nature. I remember how Mr. Lowther stuck to his place and by patience wore us down. I called him an entertaining speaker. He had a bit of the Carson style about him. Not as good a speaker, but could just be as provoking. I don't remember ever disturbing a meeting again, and I hope I never shall.

In those days public houses were good debating places—at least, certain best rooms on Sunday nights and after chapel and church time had set debates, discussions and interesting evenings. Since pubs became tied houses, the old debating places are very rare. Although a teetotaler, I used to go on sundry Sunday nights to two noted public houses to hear some local radical or other expound his views on the past week's events both local and national but chiefly national. It interested me, and it primed me to take my part in discussions at the mill during the week. As I said, I was a strong Home Ruler, and each breakfast time, as we weavers and others got our breakfasts during the meal half-hour we would thrash out subjects very keenly.

Naturally, I learnt some of my politics at the Secular Sunday School, hearing the lecturers brought down by that body, but mostly by hearing my father and his cronies talking politics on the hearthstone, and by reading advanced newspapers. We had debating societies when I was a young man, which were real attempts at arguing things through, but usually from preconceived ideas begot for us in our own circles or our own families. Possibly had I been brought up in a parson's household I might have grown into a Bishop or a Ranter, if in a manufacturer's household, into a dogmatic supporter of Laissez Faire. One can never tell the way we are born, and the where we are born has a lot to do with the good and the bad in us.

These debating societies, however, were training grounds for speech-making. It would do young men and women good to give more attention to these agencies than to some things they do. It was

thus I learnt to speak. Being somewhat shy, I wrote down what I wanted to say. Then I used to try headlines, then do without, but the best bits were the bits prepared for. The cleverest bits or the most caustic and keen, but less lasting, were those done on the spot in the excitement of debate.

Early in the 'eighties, I tried my hand at rhyming, and have done a bit both in dialect and in ordinary language. There are some that I don't like to read now, others that just give me a twinge of pleasure as I pore over them again to-day, forty-five years after they were penned. I was as proud—yet as shy—as a box of monkeys when I had my first piece in the *Huddersfield Examiner* and the *Northern Pioneer*. I was doubly proud when I got a bit in the *Vaccination Inquirer* and in the *Weekly Budget* on "Conscience Sake," a rhyme on a man who suffered for conscience sake because he wouldn't have his child vaccinated.

When I got my pieces in under the name of "Ike Longtung"—dialect sketches with localisms to them—well, I was young and flattered myself, until one day I got into a bit of a shindy for having designated one man who had been playing a cricket match by his "bye name." He threatened to knock my head off. He was big enough to do it, and as I have never been a believer in fighting, and have never struck a man or woman or child in my life, I didn't relish his threat. Then again I was in the wrong. I didn't apologise to him then, but later on—a few days afterwards—I did so, and he was brave enough to accept my apology in good spirit. It is best, if a man does wrong to another, or says something improper to another, to wipe



BEN TURNER  
(Caricature by Low)

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it off the slate by a proper personal apology and try not to do it again. A few years ago, I remember calling a friend of mine—a Labour M.P.—a bully. I felt at the moment that his methods and his language indicated it and he had said something violent and irritating to me. I retaliated with the language above. On meeting him a day afterwards, I said "I withdraw the word 'bully' used to you yesterday. It isn't right language from one man to another." He accepted my apology very freely, but didn't withdraw his words of the day before. Probably he didn't think aught about it. Whenever I have had a stormy political, or social, or public row with anybody over politics, etc., and things have got heated, mentally it has hurt me worse hurting somebody, perhaps even than the person attacked. I have called some of my best friends names at times, argued keenly and bitterly with them, and feel now that they were wrong and I was right, but when I have thought it over a night, and felt that I was not gentlemanly enough, well, I have tried to mend matters and apologise. It's not much to boast about, is it, but when years creep on us we can see what a lot of foolish things we have done and said.

I also learnt a lesson from an old newspaper man, Mr. J. Andrews, of Ashton-under-Lyne. Having written a caustic paragraph or two in his paper, he in a friendly, fatherly chat, advised me, if I wrote a letter on the spur of the moment, and thought it smart, to put it on one side until the day following, when I should re-write it or tear it up. I have done this scores of times and more often than not tore them up, or if I have sent them they have been as different as cheese from chalk. This old journalist said to me about newspaper copy,



"When in doubt, leave out." It was good advice then ; it is now.

I started courting when eighteen. It was pretty early, but I haven't a single regret, except that I might have started sooner. My wife and I have had a long time together. It's been hard, at times, but good altogether. We may be both grey and wrinkled, and yet we never see the grey hair nor the wrinkles, except we especially look for them. We don't worry over them. We have lived a long time together, and been cosy happy all the time. It was hard for the first twenty-five years of our married life. It's been much easier the last twenty years, but we could stand the hardships better, when younger, and the easier times of to-day are some compensation, for we neither of us want to change this world for another. This—bad as it is said to be—is good enough for us. We are still pals, as we were when at eighteen I began to whistle outside the house, to let her know I was waiting for her.

I got married fairly early, being just turned twenty-one. There are many views about marriage, but I believe in it, as the best institution in civilisation. I know many don't get married until they are older than I was, and maybe they are right, but I think it a great mistake for a man to remain single, if he can find a suitable mate, and there are very many unmarried women who would make good wives in this country of ours. I also believe it is not wise to drive it off too long, for a man gets into habits and ways if he waits until he is turned thirty, which take a bit of fitting into married life.

We were married at the Unitarian Church, Huddersfield, nearly forty-five years ago. The

event took place on a Sunday, as we didn't want to break any work time, and our honeymoon was spent that day amidst our relations. Wedding presents were not as common in those days as now, but we did get a teapot for my wife, a two-handled cup and saucer for me and a dozen cigars for our friends to smoke. Nowadays, wedding presents seem to be a regular feature of married times, and whilst it is good to give them or to receive them, many a time it is done for fashion's sake, when those who send them can't afford it, and even at times those who get them cannot afford to return the compliment when they want to do so.

I went to my work at the usual time—6 a.m.—on the Monday morning, and it, of course, had leaked out that I was no longer a bachelor. It was then a custom that when a man or a women got married there was a "rum and fat cake do" at the mill amongst the "sett" one worked with. My wife had ceased to work at the mill a few days before we were married, so she wasn't bothered with it, but I fell in with the custom and did my half-crown to other weavers' sixpence each, and we had rum in our tea for breakfast and the usual good wishes were sent forth by my workmates. Nowadays when folks get wed they usually have a honeymoon at some pleasure resort, and take four days to a week or more to get accustomed to each other's ways. It is a good change in methods, and whilst it was not thought of or done in working class circles then, I am sure the present plan of having a time of rejoicing is better.

We didn't have a big furnished house. We had £4 7s. 6d. saved up. My wife had a rocking chair, and with the money we bought a man's chair. (I

use the old arm-chair in our kitchen to-day.) We also got some other items of furniture and settled down as a newly wed couple should, giving and taking, helping and loving, working and trying to be happy. We have been abundantly blessed that way, and there are no regrets.

Of course, it hasn't been all beer and skittles by a long way. I guess I could have been a lot better than I have been, but that's what happens to us all. In my hours of reflection I have often been struck with the difference in wedding customs. When my father and mother were married at the mother parish church of the area, it was a six mile walk to the church and they footed it in lively fashion. They lived in that age when that was the style. In the period when I got married the wedding times and celebrations for working folks lasted just a day. Customs continually change, and twenty years ago, when working folks got married, they did so at the week-end, and then spent their honeymoon at Blackpool or some sea-side resort. Nowadays few marriages are at the week-end, and many are in mid-week, and off the couple go for a week's honeymoon amidst streams of confetti and other relics of mischief. I think it's better as it is, for it is the start of a mighty adventure. They set sail on the mystic ocean of life, and whoever they are, good luck to 'em. Sometimes it is a misfit, but usually it is all right. We get the records of the misfits chronicled in the papers, but they are the few amidst the many, and marriage is very sacred, and, I believe, always will be. I hope so, anyhow.

Of course, my wife had her bottom drawer full. It is a well-established fetish, a right one too, for a young woman expecting entering into wedlock

to get the bottom drawer full of table cloths, blankets, sheets, pillow cases, and other household linen and sundries. These things are the best help to a household when the young 'uns start coming, and I would advise all young women, when they start courting, to start doing some preparing with using their needles, their sewing machines and their talent in that direction. I would also advise young fellows who are to be married to try and get a few pounds in the Co-op, the building society or the bank, and not to fritter it away on chocolates and chewing gums and "frillery" for the young woman or himself, but both should be steady in their spending.

I am advising, and yet I didn't do it, as I should have done, but I can see the utility of it all the same.

Of course, all things are different now. Home furnishings are different. When I was a lad, the walls of most houses were colour-washed or white-washed. If a house got papered nicely the folks were getting well-to-do. The pictures on the walls would be "samplers" done by our mothers or our grandmothers. Floors were sanded floors in place of carpeted. The hearth rug—home pricked—would be laid down on a Saturday night or Sunday morning, and taken up again on Sunday night or Monday morning. I have helped to shake the rug many a time on a summer morning before my brother and I went to our work for 6 a.m. The household got a bit more refined when it got a carpet down over what used to be sanded floor. This would be taken up again on the Monday, and rolled away until Saturday afternoon, when it made the house a bit finer and also a bit warmer for the week-end. The "sampler" also gave way to the grocer's coloured

almanac. These would be put into neat frames and do duty as pictures. Those who were politicians a half-century or less ago would try and get—by paying instalments—gilt framed oleographs—of Gladstone or Bright, if Liberals—and Disraeli or Salisbury, if Conservatives. You see them in odd houses still, but not many of them. A few houses—not many—would have the picture of rebels. I bought, in a cottage house nearly forty years ago, a grocer's almanac framed, because the head of the household said he had the picture of Ernest Jones underneath the almanac. I still prize it, and it hangs in my staircase to-day as the picture of a great mind and man. I do not want to go back to sanded floors and Sunday rugs and carpets. It is nicer, cosier, warmer, and more lively to have real pictures on the wall, carpets and rugs down all the week, and they can talk about the good old days that care. I like the new ways and days a lot better. If one takes the home life itself it is much different.

Speaking of towards sixty years ago, there would be, in some homes, the old langsettle. Now it is replaced by the couch or sofa. Then they had a bare table top for their meals. True, it was often scrubbed white.

Now the table cloth at meal times is general in most homes. Formerly we used to have pint or gill pots for our tea or coffee, but then we had cups and saucers for Saturday evenings and Sundays, and on special occasions. The pint pot is not common, although it is useful for sundry purposes in many a home. It is also used very much, of course, at the mills, where the man or woman has to take his or her meals at work.

I am only young in life, yet, but the changes in

my time have been, in these particulars, all to the good. These have had a refining influence, and millions of folks of forty or less don't know what the "good" old times were like. That's why I am trying to give them a glimpse of them in these words of mine.

In the early days of married life I didn't get or need much money. It wasn't there. I didn't smoke much, I didn't drink because I didn't want it, and any little oddments one could command went to keep the home going. When I had finished a warp and received my wages for it, all of it went into the wife's apron. She would allocate so much for this and so much for that, and give me 1/- or 9d. or 6d. as the case may be. Sometimes when Thursday came, she would have spent right up, and many a time 4d. of my spending money would be given back to her to buy Friday's dinner with. It used to be a nice warm dinner, made of ■ big Yorkshire pudding such as only a Yorkshire housewife can turn out, some fry from the butcher's, three or fourpenny worth done in a dish in the oven, with onions, carrots, etc., to it, and it was and it is to-day a feast for the gods.

My first trip to London was in November, 1886. At that time unemployment was the chief topic of the day, just as it is now. It was keener in London than in the provinces, and we had many an argument over it at our breakfast time talks at the mill. Rows and riots were imminent. My work-mates were very interested, and we had a collection at the mill and they sent me on a day trip (7/6) to see the meeting in Trafalgar Square and to bring an account back with me of the same. I had a sovereign to spend, inclusive of my fares, and including my own donation of 2/-. The trip started

at 11.15 p.m. from Huddersfield, and we got there at 6 a.m. After a rum and coffee at some place close to Euston Station, I went sight-seeing, first to Covent Garden, then Billingsgate, then St. Paul's, Ludgate Circus, etc. After breakfast I went into Fleet Street, looked for Anderton's Hotel, where I had read of many Land Conferences and Radical Conferences taking place, looked where the *National Reformer* was edited, where *Reynolds's* was published, and saw the multitude of offices for newspapers in Newspaper Land. Then I watched the Lord Mayor's procession as it went on the Strand, and never saw such a circus sight like it, before or since. The students from Guy's, etc., were also on the rant, and they played their students' fooleries, etc. It was a great event for me. After this, I had some food and made my way to see other sights of London, and then to Trafalgar Square where the unemployed were going to hold their meeting. Around the Square, if one may put it that way, were hundreds of policemen. They were lined up in front of the National Gallery, on the side near Morley's Hotel, on the other side, and I saw hundreds more—so it seemed to me—out of the public gaze, on Whitehall and behind the St. Martin's Church area.

The meetings commenced and then the row started. The Horse Guards came along riding up Whitehall, and I went down to the Embankment as well as I could get along with the others. I am not a hero and never did get into a "fracas" if it could be helped, so I went with the crowd down to the Embankment, where it dispersed. Jack Williams was in that crowd, along with Navvy Hall, Hyndman, I believe, and some of the S.D.F. people. I went off on my own, afterwards, to see

the Reformers' Tree in Hyde Park, and other noted places. By tea time I was getting worn out, but I decided to see Henry Irving at the Lyceum Theatre in "Mephistopheles." I stood in the queue, paid my shilling into the gallery, and enjoyed a spectacle such as filled me with delight. Afterwards I got a glass of beer, a twopenny pie—there were some in those days—and made my way to the station, got into the train, wrapped a newspaper round my body—I didn't possess a top-coat—and got to Huddersfield by breakfast time and went to my work after the busiest thirty hours I have ever had in my life. It was a big experience for me.



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## CHAPTER VI

### "ANTI-VAC" DAYS

IN the middle of the eighties, I took part in the movement against compulsory vaccination. It may have been right or it may have been wrong, but we thought it wrong, and I joined up with a score or two more who went into the highways and by-ways, talking like learned men on facts and figures, statistics and returns, without any fear despite sneers and jeers and uninformed opposition. Looking back on some newspaper cuttings of that time, I find the following, anent a public meeting in Huddersfield Market Place :—

"Mr. Turner strongly censured the Huddersfield Bench for their utter indifference to conscientious objectors, and urged it was cruel and vindictive to fine anti-vaccinators the full penalty whilst letting drunkards, wife-beaters, and others, guilty of real and inexcusable crimes against society, off with mitigated penalties. The rich magistrates required to read and study this question as well as the poor anti-vaccinators. Mr Cotton then recited 'Doctor, spare that child,' and Mr. Turner his poem, 'For Conscience Sake,' in very good style, and were heartily applauded. A long discussion ensued, and the meeting which lasted two hours, was very successful."

So ran the report in the *Huddersfield Examiner*. When my children started to come I followed up my belief by refusing to have them vaccinated. As a result, I was summoned on four different occa-

sions. In those days the law was that you had to be summoned to shew cause why you didn't have your child vaccinated. Then it was followed by another for disobeying the order of the magistrates to have it vaccinated. The first cost 7/6, and the second cost what the magistrates thought proper up to 20/- and costs. There was also power under the Act for a layman—not a solicitor—to appear and defend another person, and I have appeared both for myself and for other folks. Of course, it was always without success. I remember going in my smock and clogs straight from the mill one forenoon to the Huddersfield Police Court to defend a fellow victim of the law. They gave me short shrift. I was expounding my opinion about the evils of vaccination when the Magistrates' Clerk cut me short. I challenged him that I had a right to speak thus in defending another man. He knew I knew that part of the law, and whilst I was continuing my speech and giving facts and figures, the magistrates said they wanted to hear no more, and inflicted the usual 20/- and costs. I was in my element, and scornfully said to the bench, "It says Justitia at the head of your chairs, but there is no justice here." A policeman got hold of my arm and pulled me away from the court seats. I protested, but he had me under physical control, and I continued to protest until he got me into the street.

Another incident I remember well in those days. We used to meet at a famous temperance hotel to lay our plans and propaganda. One Saturday morning we got postcards calling us to a special meeting for the Sunday afternoon as one of our colleagues had been sent to prison in lieu of paying the penalty inflicted. We rejoiced, for it meant a

fine demonstration and a stronger agitation for our cause. Alas! when we got to the meeting the prisoner turned up. The law was that if you had goods of your own, they had to distrain on them for the fine and costs. This young man had a good grocery business, but it was in his father's name. The house he lived in was also in his father's name, so there were no goods to distrain upon. After much patience to get him to pay the fine, and failing, they took him down one morning to Wakefield jail. One night in jail was enough—it is for any man—and he got a message sent to his father to pay the fine and release him. He came to the meeting. It was a bit humiliating, but it happened.

I happened to be sold up because I wouldn't pay the 7/6 court costs, on an order being made. The police were very good to me. They kept sending an old neighbourly policeman up to get me to pay, or to get my wife to pay, but we didn't, and after many months they sent the police trap up and took our sewing machine, my present arm-chair, my wife's chair, a square table and three bedroom chairs, to be sold. They had a big trap load. The goods were taken to an auctioneer's saleroom and not sold outside our house as expected. This was to prevent any possible demonstration, for it had been arranged that when I was sold up, there should be a protest meeting. They "old manned" or out planned us, for in taking the goods to the saleroom they countered us, and prevented a protest meeting. Perhaps it was as well. When the goods were put up for sale the first bid was 1d. A broker then bid 5/-, and one of my colleagues, by arrangement, then bid £1, and as this covered the court costs and auctioneer's costs, the sale was over. The police were extra kind. They took all

my goods and chattels back home, and the old village policeman seemed as pleased as Punch that all was over, and no trouble occurred. My old arm-chair and my wife's rocking chair still bear the mark of the Queen's bailiff who marked our goods before taking them to the sale.

When I was at court the last time, my appeal to the bench is reported as follows :—

"Turner said he had not had his child vaccinated. He appealed to the Court in the name of liberty, freedom, and reason not to make the order asked for. He remarked that the law was not always justice, but that justice ought to be law. He also said no amount of fining would make him have his child vaccinated."

I was not summoned again, for, removing a few months afterwards—perhaps 15 months after this court case—to Leeds, they didn't touch me there, for some reason or another.

For our public meetings we had one stock resolution, as follows :—

"That this meeting regards compulsory vaccination as a cruel injustice and violation of personal liberty, and urges all Parliamentary candidates to vote for its immediate repeal."

It took a long line of protests to get the compulsory part repealed. I know it got altered in stages.

The last time I appeared in court for one of my children was to swear before the bench that I had a conscientious objection, and to pay 3s. 6d. for court costs in doing so.

Later on, magistrates were given the power of signing exemptions from vaccination, and I and my wife, who was one of the first women magistrates made by the Lord Chancellor, have signed

hundreds upon hundreds of exemptions. If I said a couple of thousand, I don't think I should overstretch it, as folks knowing me used to come at all hours of the day and every day in a week to get their papers signed. I have signed them in the street and signed them in the three countries of Great Britain.

When the compulsory part went I was less an anti-vaccinator, and when my youngsters were taken to be vaccinated during one small-pox epidemic, I had myself revaccinated, as it didn't seem fair to subject three lasses just in their teens to this method without suffering myself. I don't know if vaccination is good or not. All I know is that compulsion is wrong, and that was the chief issue—the liberty of the subject.

## CHAPTER VII

### OUT OF WORK

DURING my latter days at Huddersfield I fell out of work. My loom was pulled down.

If my reader has never been out of work let him be thankful. It is the most heart breaking experience in the world for a man or a woman to have to travel from one mill to another asking a brother man for leave to work. It was the hardest nine weeks I ever had. We had two little children under two years old and nothing saved. My union paid me 7s. a week victimisation pay and with the exception of 5s. I borrowed from a friend we pulled through but I was never much of a person to sit doing nothing. I must be reading, writing or doing something, and when I was younger it was the same ; besides, when trade was slack and times were poor I had to do something. Therefore I bought some cheap fents (short lengths of drapery), and garments, on the hire-purchase system, and set out round the country to sell them in the same way.

I got customers. There was no difficulty there, but the job was getting the money. A few paid up regularly each week, but the majority of them I divided into two classes—those who could, but wouldn't, and those who would, but couldn't pay.



I was too soft-hearted to squeeze the latter, while, to be frank, I hadn't got the nerve to stand up to the others.

I don't regret the experience, for it taught me a lot about human nature, and gave me a new sympathy for the much-maligned tally-man (or Scotsman, as he is often called).

As for the financial side, well—I had to keep up my own repayments, and the best I can say about that job is that I didn't lose as much as at one time I thought I would.

The surplus stock came in for family use, so I was richer with the experience and am no poorer to-day for the money not called in.

It was an experience that has always made me kind—even when we couldn't buy anything—to the many peddlars who come to our door; a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.

After this I tried being an insurance agent for twelve months. The company treated me justly and fairly, and I earned about 24s. a week collecting and getting in new business. It was a mixed blessing. One used to do the collecting on Friday nights, Saturdays and Mondays, and canvassing the rest of the week, but there was too much loose time on one's hands—at times—and this has been many a man's misfortune. I spent too much time during the day at the club to do me good, and was really glad when a chance came to take up Union and newspaper work in full swing. I have often felt sorry for young insurance men. It needs a strong will to keep straight and there are temptations lurking everywhere. The loose time there is, or was, meant—to some—loose habits. I haven't a word to say about the company or the staff or the folks in general, but can see how men

slip into slack ways unless they are built up well, and I was pleased, therefore, to have a new opening in the labour world after twelve months at the job.

During the early part of 1889, Mr. Andrews, the proprietor of the *Ashton Reporter* and of the still existent *Cotton Factory Times*, decided to establish in Yorkshire, for Yorkshire textile workers, *The Yorkshire Factory Times*. I had done a bit of writing for the *Cotton Factory Times* for the previous three years, earning three to four shillings a week, which came in handy for books, papers, and odd home requisites, and Mr. Andrews asked me to meet Mr. Gee and himself to consider the steps to be taken to establish the "Y.F.T." and wasn't I very "chuff" when he offered me a job on lineage! I think it was three farthings per line. I began in July of that year, and at the end of the first month had earned at least eight pounds. It may not have been good journalism, but at the end of the month the Editor-Manager, Mr. Joe Burgess, the founder of the I.L.P., offered me thirty shillings a week as a regular wage, on the condition I removed to Leeds and made my centre in that town (it was not then a city). I jumped at it, and, accordingly, in August, 1889, we removed. The house we had taken was a through house (house and parlour) and our furniture looked bare and the house barren, and, like an optimist, my wife and I went and got a few more things on the hire-purchase system and made the house a bit more cosy. It was a toughish job, but we pulled through. The rent of the house was seven shillings and sixpence, as against the four shillings a week we had been paying at Huddersfield.

In 1890, we started the *Workman's Times*. In

promoting it, it was my business to go out to address many Trades Councils, and I visited Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Kidderminster, Sheffield, Leicester, Derby, Newcastle and other places on that mission.

I did it by night-travelling and day-time writing, for I did work both for the *Factory Times* and the *Workman's Times*. I used to do all sorts of writing, notes, leaders, special articles, news from villages, reports of meetings, and after we had started the *Workman's Times*, I was sent one noon to Cradley Heath to a presentation they were giving Mr. Juggins, the leader of the Cradley Heath chain-makers. I had to get there, attend the meeting, interview Mr. Juggins, and be back with the report ready for the "comps" the morning following. I wrote most of the report at Wolverhampton station during the early hours of the morning, and was back at Huddersfield with my copy ready for 8.30 a.m. It was hard, but happy work, for my heart was in it.

I kept up my Union work, and really the two fitted in as the paper gave us ample room for our mill news and textile views, and for several years the paper was a success and our union rose to bigger membership at the same time. As Leeds and District Secretary for the Union with a wage of five shillings a week, we took a little office at three shillings per week, and I went into the "hurly-burly" of Leeds Labour life.

I joined at once the Leeds Socialist Party. The membership was mixed, but not large. A few were Jews, employed in Leeds clothing houses, a few were men with anarchist views. There were a few Englishmen and Irishmen—left-wing Socialists of that period—composed the membership. The club

was about a mile and a quarter from our house, and whilst enjoying myself there with intellectual debates and disquisitions, I did not always go home as early as I should have done. Put it down that I was young and active and in my element taking part in the advanced Labour and Socialist movement. I also joined the Leeds Trades Council in 1889, and during the two years I lived in Leeds took part in its work and in its discussions. The Socialist Club folks were anti-Trades Council, and because I would stand up for the Council the anarchist element in the Socialist Club were at political enmity with me. It was at this club that I met Cunninghame Graham, Michael Davitt, Edward Carpenter, William Thorne and many another old Labour Socialist and land reformer.

The Gasworkers' Union had been formed in London a few months before, so the club arranged for Thorne and others to try and open up a branch in Leeds, and I had the honour of recording, in a voluntary way—all this work of these men in Leeds was voluntary—the first member of the old Gasworkers' Union outside London. I remember it very well. We had had a big meeting in Vicar's Croft, followed by a meeting in the Club, and those of us who could write—like Alf. Mattison, the late Tom Maguire and the late Tom Paylor—were kept busy enrolling members of the Union. It was a very lively time. The new Trades Unionism had come into activity. We never spared ourselves. Meetings were held on the various moors in Yorkshire. Branches of the Union were opened at Halifax, Spen Valley, Huddersfield and elsewhere, and every conquest made was a matter of rejoicing. Nobody expected pay in those days.

It was not alone a labour of love, but a labour of joy, for the workers seemed awake.

In addition to helping this union, I kept at it with my colleagues in our own union, addressing dozens of meetings a month besides writing four to seven columns a week in our *Factory Times*. Early and late I was at it, and I wouldn't have missed the experience for all the money in the world. At that time there would be troubles in other trades, and little speeches made for railwaymen, glassworkers, tailors, garment workers and textile workers kept me in contact with the various trade union branches.

My work on the Trades Council must have been fair, for the delegates sent me as one of their two delegates to the Trades Union Congress held in Liverpool in 1890. Of this Congress, I will write more fully later on. It was about this time that we younger folks wanted to lead the Trades Union movement out of the Liberal Party fold, and as the unions grew stronger the Socialist or Labour force grew stronger, and a large number of Labour Unions and Labour Clubs were formed, especially in the Industrial areas of the West Riding. I helped in the formation of Labour Clubs in many parts of Leeds, Huddersfield, Colne Valley, Holme Valley, Bradford and other places. We enjoyed doing it for nothing, paying our own expenses to this place and that place, being repaid, as it were, by the success we obtained. Street meetings were numerous, and although we were young men with no Oxford accent, but a Yorkshire twang, we didn't hesitate to thunder forth our views on Trades Unionism, Labour politics, on independent lines, nearly always concluding, of course, with the old slogan "The Socialisation of the means of

production, distribution and exchange." I sometimes wish the younger folks were as willing as my colleagues were in those days. Perhaps they are, but I don't always see it.

There was one demonstration I took part in at Morley, about which I didn't feel very happy. On purpose to draw a big crowd the Leeds leaders of the Gasworkers' Union called a demonstration for one Sunday afternoon, and announced by big bills that the late Sir Charles Dilke would speak. There was a great crowd in the sporting ground park, but no Sir Charles Dilke. The Chairman, however, read a telegram purporting to come from Sir Charles apologising for his absence. We carried on the meeting without him. I happened to be at Sir Charles Dilke's house the week following to lunch, and I ventured to mention that he didn't turn up at Morley. "At Morley?" he said, "Why, where is Morley?" I answered him and said he had been billed to speak. He turned to his Secretary and asked him about it, and it turned out he had neither been invited nor had he promised to speak there. When I got back to Leeds, I duly made inquiries and found it was all a fake. I didn't like it, and said so. I don't believe in such dodges and have never seen it done since and would not be party to it if anybody tried it on.

About this time the Liberal-Labour men in Leeds and Bradford were trying to stem the tide of independent Labour and established what was known as branches of the Labour Electoral Association. This Association was not a success, and they broke down with the successful establishment of Labour Unions and Labour clubs, which were anathema to the Liberal leaders of that day. It is perhaps right to say that the language of

some of my colleagues was a little like that of the Communists of to-day, and the regular Trades Union stalwart who loved his union and who was a social member of his local Liberal or Conservative Club was attacked in many cases unjustly and unfairly. Because I wouldn't always agree with these attacks I came in for some suspicion and some abuse, even from folks I was working with. It is all past, and that is perhaps why to-day, remembering those days and those hard words, I won't join in condemning any person for the views he or she may hold. I will condemn their views, and their policy, and attack their party, but personal abuse is not the way to get one's own principles looked into or accepted. There is now no connection at all with the Liberal or Conservative Party. Most Trades Union people are either Labour or neutral in politics, and the I.L.P. coming in 1893 completely killed the old Labour Electoral Association.

Whilst living at Leeds, I became an attender at a noted Temperance Café of the crude sort known as "Cave's." In a forenoon, nearly every day, some of the old radical teetotallers would come in for their coffee and "sweater." There was a best room and a common or taproom, with an upstairs room for lectures or special affairs. Mayors and prospective mayors were regular habitués. Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield had each their coffee house, where one was certain to meet thinking men and leading citizens. At Huddersfield Thornton's was a regular debating place, and when I used to go there, one could learn about politics, science, religion and social topics, including town affairs. The same at Laycock's at Bradford. Liberals, Labour men, Radicals, Agnostics, Church

and Chapel men and noted teetotallers made this a most famous debating house. The same applied at Cave's in Leeds, in addition to which, on a Sunday, Parker's made a second coffee house. There were these coffee houses in other towns. I have been in them in Burnley, Halifax, Manchester and other places, but new days bring new ways and clubs, etc., have superseded them. One of the regular attenders at Cave's was the late Archie Scarr, of whom it is said that when it was moved in Leeds City Council, that the city should put a gondola on the lake at Roundhay Park, he startled the Council by suggesting that they should buy a pair for breeding purposes! I learnt a good bit about the local affairs of a town in these coffee houses, and also heard a good bit of gossip, which, in general, is 75 per cent. imagination, 10 per cent. truth and the rest insinuation. It was in Cave's Hostel, that I once saw a well-known Trades Union leader of that day knock a man down. The man knocked down had deliberately insinuated that Mr. Judge was living on the pence of the workmen. He had an antipathy to Trades Unionism and to Trades Union officials, and Mr. Judge argued with him and had great patience with him; when he repeated his offensive observations Mr. Judge gave him chance to withdraw them, but he wouldn't, and Mr. Judge sent him to the floor. I was sorry he did it, for although the man was well-to-do, he wasn't worth it. In those days, in places where men congregated who had saved a bit of money, some of them presumed on their money power and hated the sight of a Trades Union official. Mr. Judge was physically strong enough to resent such insults.

At the Trades Council our Union took its part.



I remember once Mr. Herbert Gladstone (now Lord Gladstone) coming to speak at the Trades Council. The cutting from paper is as follows :—

#### LEEDS TRADES COUNCIL.

Mr. H. Gladstone, M.P., speaking on Labour questions said : " Socialism had hardly set its foot for any practical purpose in Leeds, but it was sure to come." (A Voice : " It is here.") He did not want Labour to be disassociated with politics. Modern Socialism attacked the whole structure of society. Discussing the Socialist teachings, Mr. Gladstone said he did not think there was any sign of slavery in Leeds.

MR. BEN TURNER : There's plenty of it.

MR. GLADSTONE : Yes. It depends on what you mean. There is no want of independence of mind.

MR. TURNER : No, but action.

Mr. Ben Turner moved the best thanks of the meeting to the chairman, and in doing so said he was sorry Mr. Gladstone had to go, as it was hardly fair to discuss his speech in his absence. Many of Mr. Gladstone's statements were erroneous ; his theories unsound, and his arguments incorrect ; and he would have liked to have shown him how and why. (Cheers.)

It has been my lot to listen to offensive observations about myself in trams, buses and public places, but I have never yet hit a man, woman or child, and I want to finish up in that peaceful fashion. It was sometimes awful to hear a workman in the street snarlingly say " There's that idle —— Turner," or a young son of a firm say he knew Turner—" He never did work and never will"—when at the same time I was putting in ten to fourteen hours a day—week-day and Sunday alike. I say it unboastingly that I do not know a man who has worked harder—I don't say better—than I have done for the past thirty-five years.

When we had lived about two years in Leeds my wife and I felt it desirable—for health and

other reasons—to live nearer the bigger textile centres than Leeds was, and “a house hunting” we went. It was more by accident that design that we moved to Batley. We had been out looking for a cottage house in and around for a few weeks, and one forenoon, as I was on the top of the old steam tram, running from Dewsbury to Birstall, I spied in a house a paper “This House to Let.” I immediately got off, went to look at the house, and, in a half-hour, had taken it. After getting the key, I found two women who agreed to clean it out. It was in a fair condition. I went and joined Batley Co-op., ordered one ton of house coal (12s. 6d. including loading and dividend), went to the post-office and telegraphed home to get ready to remove, arrived home at tea-time and went to see a furniture remover and had flitted the next day. That was now nearly thirty-eight years ago. How time flies and what a time of activity it has been since !

## CHAPTER VIII

### TRADES UNION WORK

THE birth of a Trades Union goes further back than the actual date of the official establishment of the Union. The conception of a Trades Union in an industry or a section of the same goes back to the earliest times when persons worked for wages. Trades Unionism in the woollen and worsted trades was in existence in the days of the old guilds. It was present in Scotland amongst weavers, for there was a Trades Union at Paisley in the latter part of the 18th century. It was publicly prominent in our West Riding towns in the early part of the 19th century. There were Textile Unions of a very definite character in Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Leeds, and Bradford long before our present Union was established. The old records shew that in the days of the Peterloo massacre there were Unions established which had their day and went out again leaving behind them at all times the faithful few who never let the ideal of Trades Unionism out of their minds.

In 1818, after the big fire at Colne Bridge Mills, near Huddersfield, the Textile Workers formed a Union. This fire struck horror into the hearts of many people. Sometimes great calamities are needed to move a nation onwards. Anyone who cares to go into Kirkheaton Churchyard will find

there a monument erected to the memory of seventeen children who lost their lives at Atkinson's Cotton Mill, at Colne Bridge, near the famous Three Nuns hostelry. The fire broke out during the night and, the gates of the mill being locked, the poor things had little chance of escape. The little ones tried to get out, but the overlooker, who had the key of the doors in his pocket, was not able to open the doors and seventeen lives were lost, the youngest being nine, and the oldest eighteen years of age.

Sir Robert Peel, in introducing his Bill for regulating the hours of labour for cotton factories, mentioned this great catastrophe. The Huddersfield Short-time Committee had its origin from the outcry raised by this lamentable disaster, coupled with the agitation of Robert Owen and other social reformers of that day for shorter hours and the abolition of night work for children. The town of Huddersfield owes much to these Short-time Committeemen for their public spirit and their agitation. The result of the continued agitation was that the Government appointed a commission or committee to inquire into the subject of the hours of labour.

The twenties were prolific in organisations and in concentrated agitation for social justice. There was the same feverish anxiety to move forward with the Unionism of a hundred years ago as there is now. The country had not recovered from the evils of the great wars. They were suffering from profiteering, from paper money, from aggrandisement of capital, and from commercial disorder and plunder, as we are now.

There are records shewing that a Weavers' Union existed in Leeds in the twenties of last century, for Mr. Joseph Oates, speaking before

## ■ ABOUT MYSELF

the Short-Time Commission in 1824, said "he represented the body of Labour men in the cloth trade in Leeds, Holbeck, Armley, and Wortley, and they had formed a Union covering that area and Dewsbury, combining both spinners and weavers under the title of General Union of Weavers and Spinners."

Labour conditions were a bit rough in those days, for in a document in September, 1822, it is recorded that

"In consequence of repeated entreaties, the principal masters met a deputation at the Rose and Crown Inn, Huddersfield, on Tuesday, the 21st July, and, after a patient hearing of the unexampled sufferings then detailed, it was unanimously agreed that an inquiry into their state should take place, under the management of a committee of the operatives and the several parish officers and other respectable neighbours who might feel disposed to assist the undertaking. The meeting of the masters and the deputation of operatives was adjourned from time to time until the returns were completed; and after careful examination it appears that in several townships, mostly occupied in the fancy business, there are upwards of 13,000 individuals who have not more than 2½d. each per day to live upon, and find wear and tear for looms, etc. Whatever be the cause of such distress, it is feared that the agonising conditions of families so circumstanced cannot long be endured."

Oastler's time was a busy time for Yorkshire. He was the "Factory King," yet strange to say he had nothing to do with factory work, being a land agent for the Thornhill Estates at Fixby Hall. Oastler tumbled into the short-time movement. Meeting Mr. John Wood, of Bradford, one day, they began to talk over social evils and factory life, and so strongly was he touched by what he learnt that he became the chief exponent of the short-time movement for Yorkshire, just as John Fielding, M.P., became the one for Lancashire.

He became known all over as the Factory King.

Oastler himself was not always gentle in language ; his devotion to the cause did not always escape criticism. The Pilgrimage of the Yorkshire factory workers to York to claim the Eight-Hours Bill, the vow then taken to have the Bill and nothing less than the Bill, would have been termed illegal to-day under our D.O.R.A., and I always feel sorry that Huddersfield has not given evidence of the gratitude it ought to show to Oastler's work for the children in the years when he lived at Fixby Hall.

These days were hard bad days for children as anyone can learn by reading Alfred's "History of the Factory Acts," Croft's "Life of Oastler," John Fielding's brave book about the eight-hours' day agitation, Owen Balmforth's "History of Huddersfield," or Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's series of books, including the "Town Labourer and the Skilled Labourer," or Mr. and Mrs. Webb's "History of Trades Unionism."

In those days a number of little children were apprenticed from the workhouses to go to work at the early ages of seven, eight, and nine years old. Listen to the story of what should be "The Happy Days of Childhood," as told before the House of Commons Select Committee in the year 1832. The witness is named Abraham Whitehead. He says :—

"I am a clothier, and reside at Scholes, near Holmfirth, which is the centre of very considerable woollen mills for three or four miles. The youngest age at which children are employed is never under five ; some are employed tween five and six as pieceners. I live near to parents who have been sending children to mills for a great number of years, and they know positively that these children are every morning of the winter season called out of bed

between five and six, in some instances between four and five. I have seen children of tender years employed as late as ten p.m. in the winter season. I have been in mills at all hours, and I never in all my life saw the machinery stopped at breakfast time at any of the mills. The children get their breakfast as they can; they eat and work; there is generally a pot of water porridge, with a little treacle in it, placed at the end of the machines, and when they have exerted themselves to get a little forward with their work they take a few spoonfuls for a minute or two and then to work again, and continue to do so until they have finished their breakfasts. This is the general practice, not only of the children, but of the men in the woollen mills in the district."

I joined my Trade Union towards the end of 1882. It was the old Weavers' Union, established in 1881. The contributions were nil. We paid for our cards and rules, and the funds were raised by a very slight monthly, quarterly or special levy. It was really playing at Trades Unionism, but was as far advanced as the old Radical section felt able to go. I was a delegate to the union from our weavers in January, 1883.

Then the big dispute begun at Huddersfield, in March, 1883, over the wage reduction, and I continued as delegate during the eleven weeks of bitterness of the great dispute. The longer the dispute lasted the more cross-currents came along, and I always think the secretary for the weavers was badly treated by his colleagues, or, rather, the workers. I have seen, many a time, men who were reckoned as heroes in and during a trade dispute, cast adrift and condemned by the same folks if the dispute has not ended satisfactorily. No long drawn-out dispute did or does, and the suffering folks are prone to attack and assail their best friends, who have been working for them. A trades union official can be a hero one day and

be classed as a villain a week or two after by those whom he tried to help. Friend A. J. Cook will have learnt this, anyhow. I have known, and felt it at times, although, generally speaking, kindness and friendship have been my lot.

My more active union work was when Mr. Gee and I became connected. It arose out of a draft letter I sent to Mr. Gee, dated January 16, 1885, in which I wrote him as follows:—

"I am extremely sorry that our union is so low down in numbers, and I write this with a desire to produce, ■ possible, a reaction in our favour. I only send it to you to see whether you could suggest anything besides the waste paper basket for it. I tried to write it as a manifesto or leaflet, or something of that sort. I have spent much of my time studying trade and social questions, and I get some mad schemes, as Mr. Paris would put it, into my head, but then they are warped (not by prejudice) but by ignorance—a trait we are all subject to, even the wisest of us. I wonder sometimes ■ the rules of our society could be altered and amended so as to be more effective. The organisation as it is is almost valueless. Altered somewhat after the style of the cotton spinners, workers, and weavers in our neighbouring county of Lancashire. I have tried often and often at our place to get weavers to join, but they say it isn't good enough. Couldn't you and others give lectures at various places in clubs, etc., on the objects and advantages of Trade Unions? I think it could be done at little expense. Of course these are only suggestions. You may have thought and discussed them for what I know, but I feel convinced they would do some good.

Yours truly,

BEN TURNER."

I enclosed him a draft manifesto, and in it I wrote:—

"Fellow Weavers,—We live in troublous times. Trade is bad, wages are low, and our poor are getting poorer. Hundreds in our own town are verging on the brink of pauperism. Such is the gloomy condition of the masses.



We toil long hours, weary hours, for a scanty pittance—a pittance only just sufficient to keep body and soul together without being able to save up for a rainy day. Hundreds, aye, thousands, are out of work and starving and those who are in work are nearly as bad. It is a deplorable matter for consideration, but it must be considered and dealt with, and I assert that only by uniting together and by joining our unions, where it must be made the subject of discussion, can any decided action take place."

and another 500 words on similar lines. Mr. Gee came to see me, and for over forty-four years our co-operation in union work was very close. By the way, my close friendship with Mr. Gee has lasted right away to this day. Not that we haven't had our bits of "fraps." I have known us argue about points of policy until people thought we were "fratching," but we were not. He was dogmatic; so was I; and we thrashed things out as to what was the best step to take on union matters or in seeing employers or in addressing meetings, and as neither of us talk in whispers, well—folks could be forgiven if they thought us to be "fratching." We were not, and I hope and believe we never shall.

The Union decided, in 1885, to revise its rules, and with what delight I viewed being put upon the Rules Revision Committee. We plodded along for months on the work of revision, read scores of other unions' rules up, and had to make ours fit a low contribution because there was so much anti-unionism about or so little trades unionism possible. The union's income was only a few pounds per year. The bulk of those who were paper members, on a levy basis, in 1883, slipped away when a regular contribution—even at a low sum—was instituted, and we hadn't the needful

audacity to plunge in for a solid contribution. It would have been just as well if we had done, but we were all poor folks, with poor incomes and poor trade, and hadn't the vision that we ought to have had.

After putting me on the Rules Revision Committee they placed me on the Executive Committee and I have never been off from that time to this—now forty-four years ago. They also placed me on the directorate of the Friendly and Trades Club.

It was my pleasure to be a delegate to the Trades Council, and, generally speaking, I was in at much that went on, in a little way, in the movements of Labour at Huddersfield.

I remember urging an eight-hours' day. Our union was anxious for a legal eight-hours' day at that time, and early in 1886, we issued a ballot paper to our members, containing the following questions :—

1.—Are you in favour of an eight hours limit of the day's work, total 48 hours per week? Or, as an alternative to this,

2.—Are you in favour of a total cessation of work on Saturdays?

3.—Are you in favour of Parliament enforcing an eight hours' day by law, or enforcing a Saturday holiday by law?

4.—Or, are you in favour of obtaining either of these privileges by the free and united efforts of the organised trades of the Kingdom?"

The voting was for an eight-hours' day by legal enactment.

When the 12 o'clock Saturday stop was agitated for in 1900, our Textile Workers' Federation was in active existence. None of the skilled Unions nor the Dyers' Unions were in co-operation with us. It was won by our Union and just a few small

ones, including the late Yeadon Factory Workers' Union. The ballot paper issued then was as follows :—

**YORKSHIRE TEXTILE WORKERS' FEDERATION.  
TWELVE O'CLOCK SATURDAY CLOSING BILL.**

Are you in favour of all Textile Mills stopping at twelve o'clock on Saturday until six a.m. on Monday (except for repairs) ?

Please put a X in Column " Yes " or " No," according to your opinion.

Report result to B. Turner, Weavers' Office, Batley, as early as possible.

I have given a great part of my life to trying to build up the union for textile workers, and though not bragging about it, I have not spared myself. In the earlier days my wife saw far too little of me, as is proved by the following few extracts from my diary for the early part of 1890.

Wednesday: Meetings at Morley, Batley, Birstall, Dewsbury, Leeds Trades Council Meeting in evening.

Friday: Two local meetings.

Saturday: Addressed weavers on strike at Buslingthorpe. Weavers meeting at Bradford in evening.

Tuesday: Meetings at Buslingthorpe, Leeds, Shipley and Bradford.

Wednesday: Buslingthorpe, Hunslet, Morley, Batley, Leeds (29 new members at Leeds).

Not bad going that—eighteen meetings in a week! The names of the places may not convey much to you, but they represent a good many miles of journeying.

The note after the last entry I have quoted—"twenty-nine new members at Leeds"—may seem strange. The explanation is that twenty-nine was such a good result in those days that I considered it worth recording.

I find another record regarding Skipton, where we enrolled 120 new members, and I guess I was "chuff" over it.

We had heart-breaking experiences of meetings with only three or four folks present, and no new members, so when we got a good number, it put us into good "fettle" with ourselves.

Another day my diary informs me that I went to Bradford to a meeting of strikers, then on to Keighley to a weavers' meeting at Merrall's, then home at 11 p.m. I find another record stating that I was at Skipton until noon, then went to Huddersfield to another strike there, travelling seventy-eight miles, being away from home fourteen hours. For this I got 1s. 6d. and my meals. True, I had 30s. a week for newspaper work, which kept the home going, or I couldn't have done it.

In those times I travelled into all the textile villages and towns of the West Riding.

It proves what a lonely time my wife had, and what a lot of work of its sort I tried to get through. Again quoting from my diary, I find on January 2nd I went to Morley, Batley, Birstall and Dewsbury, in the daytime, and to the Leeds Trades Council meeting at night. I spent 4s. 4d., of which 1s. 9d. was fares, 1s. 8d. dinner and tea, and the rest stamps and papers.

On the Friday I was at the curriers' dispute in Leeds, and at night at a meeting of dyers. My expenses were 1s. 3d. and 1s. respectively for dinner, tea and drinks at the pub where the dispute meeting and dyers' meetings were held. On the Saturday I went to a strike of weavers at Buslingthorpe, later on to Stephens' Cocoa House, and then to Bradford, to a weavers' meeting, and my expenses were 3s., plus 9d. I spent on "Looking Back-

wards," My written comment on the latter is "A very good book."

Two days later the diary records : " Meeting of Skelsey's strikers at Batley in the forenoon, followed by another at night—left home at 9 a.m., arrived home at 10.30 p.m."

On the day following the record reads : " Met employers at a firm in Dewsbury—Messrs. Wilford and Johnsons ; afternoon examining price-lists with some Batley weavers ; night, attending meeting of No. 5 Branch of the Associated Society of Engineers at Hunslet."

The following Monday saw me at the Batley Police Court. The firm of Skelsey's had summoned the weavers for breach of contract in going on strike without finishing their contract, and Mr. Gee and I had been sent for to smooth matters over. We compromised by the weavers subscribing £10 to Batley Hospital, and the dispute ended. We were on the job all day and night.

Well do I remember the time when we tried the Union to get a banner for demonstrations and an emblem for the members. I think the General Executive were afraid to spend money, to launch out, " to dare something," in fear of the members complaining and criticising at the half-yearly meetings. There were some who could not see spending a penny on what after all, is the spice advertisement for a Union. However, Messrs. Gee, Drew, and myself kept at it, and we got a banner made at Bradford. It is now hiding itself at the head office. It is not a big banner. We were limited to a few pounds and we only got a few pounds' worth of banner. I remember the few lines we had on it. I was much acquainted with the system that happened in weaving places where the women got

longer warps and more picks per inch than paid for, and sometimes fines took part of their wages. So I wrote for the banner the lines :—

“ Let our warps be straight,  
Our picks be true ;  
The prices just,  
And paid when due.”

This banner did for many years, but about fifteen years ago, with wider visions, we were instructed to get a new banner—bigger, nobler, and more attractive, and this banner, with its picturesque man and woman textile worker shaking hands is a vast improvement on the old one. The lines I wrote, and which are painted on it, are as follows :—

“ The world is for the workers,  
We mean to have it, too ;  
Unite ye working comrades,  
And claim what is your due.”

On the top of the banner, in a half circle, is the line : —

“ There is no wealth but life.”

On the reverse side the line :—

“ Unite to win a world-wide brotherhood.”

The button or badge was a brain-wave I had. It meant something and nothing, but it had its psychological bearing. At one mill a manager had to meet a deputation of men, and when he saw on every smock the Union button, he said, “ Hang it, it’s no use talking to you. I’d better talk to the Union folks now.” He did so, and a good agreement was settled up.

There had been trades unionism in what is known

as the Heavy Woollen District, namely, Dewsbury, and surrounding parts, for over 100 years. It died in the 'thirties, reared its head again in the 'forties, slept in the 'fifties, and began again in the 'sixties. There was a trades council in the 'sixties, meeting at Dewsbury, and sending its written opinions to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Trades Unions. The printed report in front of me is headed :—

#### DEWSBURY TRADES COUNCIL.

#### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS PUT BY THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO TRADES UNIONS.

##### I.

#### OBJECTS OF TRADES UNIONS.

Question 1.—Has the institution of Trades Unions, according to your experience, tended to facilitate or improve the dealings and relations between workmen and their employers, or the contrary?

Answer.—That this Council is satisfied that Trades Unions have tended materially to facilitate and improve the dealings and relations between workmen and employers.

Question 2.—What are the leading questions between the employers and the workmen, in the decision of which you think the action of the Union operates beneficially for the workmen?

Answer.—The benefits resulting from the action of Trades Unions are to maintain the rate of wages, to regulate the hours of labour, and to prevent any undue advantage being taken by the employers.

And thus they go on into at least twenty pages of questions and answers. They believed, as I believe, in conciliation. They believed, as I believe, in the principle of arbitration in trades disputes.

Prior to the second trades council, starting in July, 1891, by a meeting called by myself, we had

not a definite branch of our union, although I acted as the official head of it, so I set about getting our members into one, and find on the first page of the Minute Book of the Heavy Woollen District Branch the following : —

HEAVY WOOLLEN DISTRICT BRANCH OF THE  
WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE.

POWER LOOM WEAVERS' ASSOCIATION.

Inaugurated January 6th, 1892.

An' may the branch be quite successful,  
As it is greatly wanted ;  
An' if it droops as ■ t'would fail,  
We'll start again undaunted.—B.T.

The office was at our house ; rent, rates, gas, coal, cleaning, etc, 1s. per week ; salary £12. What a task it was ! What a family task it became right to the edge of the war ! All my daughters helped me when they got able to enter books up. They would take collectors' contributions, pay them their commission, and take down many of the complaints. I could not have gone through it but for their help. When I hear some of the folks in unions grumble about a bit of overtime or a bit extra work or that they have to do a bit on a Sunday, I smile. That was how the union was built up, and we were glad to do it and grow. They gave me £50 a year later on, but we got a very bad patch of trade, and depression of membership, so I lowered it, after getting the committee's permission, to £20 a year. I had £2 a week in 1912, and it got to £4 during the early part of the war. I am paid enough, and don't want any more, although I get forty to fifty per cent. less than some other union officials. When we formed our amalga-



mation in 1922, three of the older officers, including myself, accepted a wage reduction on purpose to get amalgamation made possible. Not many folks would have done it, but my dead colleague, Alderman Herbert Lockwood, Mr. Hoyle and myself dropped our wages 15s. to 25s. per week to make things smooth. I don't regret doing it, but some who throw bricks at officials don't know and don't want to know that some officials can do a bit of sacrificing for a principle or a policy.

I am still General President of the Union. It was made a full-time post in 1922, and as I had been the unpaid President for 20 years before, I became the paid President on the date of the amalgamation. I ceased to be a paid district secretary then, and changed my headquarters from our Dewsbury office to our head office at Bradford.

I am very pleased that during the few years before ceasing to be district secretary I got our folks to allow me to buy two properties at Dewsbury and Batley. They are the centre landmarks in the two areas, and the Textile Hall at Batley commands a position that is the envy of those who would like central premises for social club purposes. We don't sell ale at Batley. I hope they never will. After I left the Dewsbury office they did and do sell ale. They are upgrown, and entitled to do so. Still, I have a pang of regret they do, but they tell me teetotal places won't pay. Our Union has about twenty clubs and union owned offices in various parts. Some sell beer, some don't. It's a matter of taste and custom. I am not a pledged teetotaler, and do not like beer or spirits, but I don't object to anybody having a drop if they want it or need it. My only advice to my many club friends is—don't go over the top.

As President of the Union I have a multitude of jobs to do, but they let me have great freedom, for they know I shall not let them down from lack of trying to do right. I have had to take unpopular lines with some members at times. Do it nicely, but do it, is my motto, and I remember warning some members not to go on strike, but to negotiate a bit longer, but they didn't heed me. They now know better, but in place of recognising they were told of it, they wanted to blame me for letting them go astray! They did it disregarding my advice. Yet I won't say to them "I told you so." That gets us nowhere. I have tried and am trying my best to help these folks to get out of their trouble, and would succeed if trade was anything like normal.

I want to finish up with the official side of the union in four years' time. I don't know if they will let me go on so long!—guess they will—but at 70 I want to stop off and give the younger folks my job and my task, but even then I don't want to do nothing. I want to do anything needful, and live and see the Union I have helped to make and the movement I am part and parcel of become the mighty engine for mutual progress that it can and should be.

The Trade Union official of to-day is a far different class of man from the one of thirty or forty years ago. In those days he had to be propagandist, clerk, errand boy, negotiator, general handy man, and be up-to-date with his own trade details. He was largely, if not solely, concerned with his own union, its work, and nothing else.

He was kept to the grindstone, and worked long hours. He had to deal with contributions and benefits, to be at the call of Branches, to attend

their meetings—often in public-house parlours—to tell them all that was going on, and only reach home late at night. Then in the morning he would be early at work entering up contributions, handing out benefits, arguing changes of customs, wages and hours of labour, dealing with correspondence, and taking his own letters to post.

His staff consisted of himself ; some few had an errand boy ; only very large unions had a clerk. Typists were unknown, and often the office was the secretary's own home. Even the Trades Union Congress itself had only a part-time man and a clerk up to about 1914.

The old unions dealt with friendly society benefits in addition to trade benefits ; the new unions ignored the former. The old unions had very complicated book-keeping arrangements, while the new unions were busier making members than book-keeping. The old trade union official was clerk, book-keeper, banker, financier ; the new one more of a propagandist, a platform man, and a negotiator.

The old hands had a hard struggle to keep the movement alive when it was unpopular and dubbed dangerous, but they paved the way for the new ideals in the labour world, and whilst there was some conflict at times between the old and the new in methods and ideals, many of the old ones helped the new unions into power and life.

Politics were taboo in the old days, and independent labour politics were looked upon as "nasty," but the new unionism brought the new agencies of labour representation. There were not fifty labour men on public bodies in all England before 1888, and not one independent labour man

(though several very able liberal-labour men were there) in Parliament.

The change came with the incursion of the trade union official into local politics, when the official was chosen to stand for Town Council, School Board, or Board of Guardians. He stood plenty of abuse, paid his own election expenses, and met any expense he was put to whilst on Town Council or other public work. The joining up of the trade union official with public work has done him good, and has done the public bodies good also. It has brought credit to the union as well. It has been one of the means of educating union members on public matters and of making the public bodies better acquainted with the life and labour of the democracy.

I always encourage our own union officials to take up public life and do their bit in the wider Labour world. There are too many of our trade union officials not active enough in this realm of life, and they ought to be. I know it doesn't pay or add to their salary, but it adds to their usefulness.

## CHAPTER IX

### STRIKES AND LOCK-OUTS

THE biggest lock-out in our own trade was that in Huddersfield in 1883. It was here that I got my trades union baptism. The old Weavers' Union had a very loose financial constitution, and in place of weekly contributions we only paid a levy each quarter, with extras when called upon. As previously stated I joined it in 1882, so I have now entered my forty-seventh year of membership. Each firm of weavers paying their levies was entitled to send one or more delegates. I happened to work at a small commission weaving place, and my co-weavers made me their delegate. Early in the new year of 1883 there were rumblings and rumours about a new scale or rate of wages being prepared by the employers' association, and in February it came to a head. Some of the employers had got it into their heads that the weavers were earning too much money, so they tried the plan of a new proposal, which meant a change downwards. The old story is related that old Mr. Mallinson, of Linthwaite, and his wife were having a chat one day and considering how to increase their growing wealth more speedily, and the story goes that he had found a way to make another £5 a week. His wife asked how, and he replied, "Well, tha sees, if we drop a shilling a cut an' th' weyvers turn aght a hundred

pieces a week, that a'll be five pahnd for us. It 'ull nobbut be a shilling a cut for them." Report says it was done. It has been done many a time at many a place, and this idea of a reduction by a new scale was very clear before the minds of the weavers. The employers' association, rich and dominative, were intent on a complete change of calculations, and put before the weavers' union a proposal which they intended to put into operation in March. Both sides were perhaps a bit stiff-necked, and not as wise in their approaches to each other as they might have been, and when the bombshell of the employers was thrown into the union camp, the union people resented both the method and the matter. It was a revision of wages downwards. There was a new loom coming along, speeded up by 33 per cent., and the employers' new price list was so built up that it took all the 33 per cent. benefit of extra speeds. In those days the bulk of the weavers were men, and the finest of fine cloths were manufactured in that area. I think it is the premier town for cloths for men's wear to this day. These men weavers felt angry at the new move, and the new scale, and rejected it. There were various attempts by well-meaning folks to get a settlement, but it was in vain, and in March the lock-out began and 90 per cent. of the looms and, therefore, the mills, closed down. It raged for eleven weeks. It was, generally speaking, a peaceful dispute. There were few blacklegs, for the employers, in place of running that costly risk, sent a quantity of their easier woven cloths to Bradford and Halifax. Generally, the sympathy of the workers in the town was with the locked out weavers, but the tradesmen and business men, as usual, backed the

employers, and wanted the workpeople to settle—however they settled. There were demonstrations and processions, mass meetings and intrigues with intermediaries, but it dragged on its way and became a fight with hunger and despair, ranged against a wealthy plutocracy, and after eleven weeks it ended in a compromise, mostly in favour of the employers.

It engendered a bitter feeling between the two sides that took a few years to wipe out, and as is not unusual in losing battles, some of the workpeople who had applauded the men's leaders the loudest were the readiest to curse them when it had been lost. I attended nearly all the delegate meetings, including the one called by the Mayor, when the final ballot was taken. We were all depressed, and nearly everybody seemed anxious to find a scapegoat, and they made one of the then secretary, who later on had to emigrate to America to earn a livelihood. The employers knew how to victimize a man in those days just as odd ones or their satellites do to-day. There was no strike pay practically for the bulk of the operatives. There were no funds; only light collections and donations, and married men with children were looked after a little bit, but in those days, as different from now, men stood for their principles on short rations, and did not expect to get financial help until they had been on strike or locked out for a few weeks. Nowadays the younger generation want strike pay from the first day, and in the General Strike of 1926 some adult strong-spoken men even whined because they were not paid for two or three days in the dispute. It's a different age and a different idea of carrying on a dispute. The clearing up of a trade dispute is far harder

work than starting one. There are cheers at the start and sometimes bricks at the finish.

During that and succeeding years there were two attempts to put our union on a sounder financial basis, and towards the end of 1883 we began to pay a monthly contribution. Thousands didn't pay; hundreds did. We had a lawyer to draft our new rules, but they were too classical or too legal to understand, and in 1885 we decided to revise them again, and my first official connection came when they put me on the Rules Revision Committee, and I have held office right away from then without a break. I hope I am good for a few years longer; anyhow, until I have done the half-century.

The next big strike I had anything to do with was the strike at Leeds. It was of tailoresses at a big clothing factory, and it was in this trouble that I became closely acquainted with three sisters of one old Leeds family—the Misses Bessie, Emily and Isabella Ford. Emily is still living, and is a famous church artist. Her sister Bessie helped on unpopular causes, and was a social and musical helper for the poorer people of Leeds; and Miss Isabella, the youngest of the three, became a noted Labour woman, a foundation member of the Independent Labour Party and a fighter for women's franchise. She called me in to help her, and we used to address the strikers in various halls and meeting places. It ended in a compromise, but it stirred Leeds up a bit, and from it came the Leeds Tailoresses' Union which is now merged in the Tailors and Garment Workers' Union. From it also came the old Clothiers' Operatives' Union, which is also merged in the national body. We were able to get a little help for the women, and



on two occasions we distributed strike pay to the tune of 4s. and 5s. respectively, which in those days was looked upon as moderate.

Another strike I remember very vividly was that of the Leeds Gasworkers. The men had just become members of the newly-formed Gasworkers' Union, and they had caught the new spirit and were determined they would try for the eight hours' day. London gasworkers had won it, the Dockers' Union had won their "tanner per hour," and New Unionism, as it was termed, as distinct from Craft Unionism, was the order of the day. They made their demands to the Leeds Gas Committee, who turned them down. This challenge the men met by going on strike, and for about a week Leeds was a most lively and darkened place. The Gas Committee were unwise enough to try and fill the men's places with blacklegs, and trainloads of them coming to Leeds set the town afire. The Gas Committee got beds and food and beer into Meadow Lane, and New Wortley Gasworks, and believed they had won, but the gas stokers had their blood up, and lamps were broken in the streets and attacks were made upon the gasworks and the blacklegs. I well remember being with the men at the battle of the bridge at New Wortley when the soldiers charged the crowd. Believing then, as I do now, that all violence is wrong, I said to a few of the strikers, "Don't commit any violence. The soldiers are here"; when one hurried round to me and said, "Get away or we'll knock your b—— head off." Just then the soldiers charged us on the Holbeck side of the New Wortley gasworks, and a number of us just squeezed into two friendly houses ere any physical damage was done. When all the ferment was on

and the rioting taking place, the Gas Committee got a glimmer of reason put into their heads, and conferences were arranged between the union and the committee, and the eight hours' day was won. It could all have been done before if the old doctrinaire councillors and aldermen had been wise enough to have had the conference first.

I quote from the *Souvenir History of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers* issued after forty years and published by the Union, March, 1929!

The author, Will Thorne, M.P., writes :

"The splendid success of the London Gasworkers for an eight hours day stirred the imagination, and Leeds was one of the first to respond. The credit of taking the initial steps to organise the Leeds men belongs to the little band of Socialists of the time, and in this connection occur the names of Tom Maguire, Tom Paylor, Alderman Ben Turner and Alf Mattison.

"Six weeks after the Union was formed, most important concessions were obtained for gasworkers. The Leeds Gasworkers' Branch was formed in October, 1889, the first branch formed in Yorkshire. At the time the Leeds gasworkers' conditions were: twelve hours' work in one shift per day for stokers, wheelers, yardmen, and purifiers; wages, 5s. per day for stokers, 3s. 4d. per day for wheelers, yardmen, and purifiers, and one-fourth extra for one shift on Sundays, but after negotiations with the Leeds Gas Committee, who, finding that the spirit of the Union was so strong in the men that resistance to their just demands would be useless, agreed reluctantly and with very bad grace, to the following conditions: a reduction of hours from twelve to eight for stokers and wheelers, and the making of a new class (firemen) with eight hours per day and 5s. wages. All classes got time-and-a-half for Sunday work. The wheelers received an advance to 4s. per day, and the yardmen and purifiers, who had to still work 54 hours per week, received 2s. per week advance in wages. The stokers only did two hours less work, and the coal wheelers 20 per cent. less work in the eight hours than in the twelve. The extra Sunday pay, also,

instead of being paid to one twelve-hour shift, was paid to three eight-hour shifts—from 6 a.m. on Sunday to 11 a.m. on Monday.

"In June, 1890, the Gas Committee thought, as some of them said, that 'their turn had come.' They demanded (1) that the men should engage themselves for four months at a time, and to have no power to strike within that period; (2) that the stokers' work within the eight hours should be increased. The men refused these terms, and were locked out on the 30th June. Three days before the Stokers were locked out all the other hands struck work. Blacklegs were brought from various places outside the town. The populace was at once exasperated, and encounters of the most violent nature took place between the police and military on the one hand, and the general mass of the townspeople on the other. After four days' struggle, the Gas Committee gave way, all blacklegs were discharged, and the old hands reinstated.

"How the gas gave out and Leeds for five nights was in complete darkness; how public feeling became incensed against the Committee; how hundreds more police and a regiment of mounted soldiers were sent for; how, when a convoy of blacklegs protected by the latter was on its way through the town to the new Wortley Gasworks, and passing under one of the railway bridges, it was attacked by a crowd of thousands of people. How the people got possession of the bridge and poured down tons of brickwork and stones upon the enemy, and how a pitched battle—in which the women played no inconspicuous part—lasted till nightfall in the streets—all this is matter of history. Such fighting was not common, but in many places the struggle was bitter, and sometimes prolonged."

Another big dispute with which I was closely connected was the lock-out or strike at Manningham Mills, Bradford. In December, 1890, Mr. S. Cunliffe-Lister, who later on became Lord Masham, decided that a big reduction should be made in the wages of his operatives. It ranged upwards of 25 per cent. These very fine mills employed towards 5,000 workpeople. All of them were not affected by the dispute, but the weavers, to the

number of many hundreds, were faced with the proposal just on the eve of Christmas. At that time, when weavers were in trouble, they nearly always sent for our union trio, Gee, Drew and Turner, and I remember about December 17th getting a wire from our general secretary, Mr. Gee, to proceed with him and Mr. Drew to a meeting of these weavers. We met them. A courteous note was sent to the firm, but it received no response. The reduction was placarded, and the workpeople, after a ballot vote, declined to accept it, and the strike, lock-out or dispute began. What a hectic time it was! It lasted nearly six months, and twice and sometimes three times a week we had processions of the workpeople marching from near the millgates by several routes to the centre of Bradford. Sometimes we held meetings in the Skating Rink, sometimes in St. George's Hall, other times in Peckover Square, and other times at the end of the Town Hall. There were no funds to start with, only odd ones were financial members of their union, and we had to do many things to raise the wind to help the hardest hit in that long struggle. The total funds raised came to over £11,000—a tidy sum in those days. It was my duty, along with a working member of the committee, or on my own, to visit trades union centres in Dundee, Forfar, Edinburgh, Newcastle, London and other places. For many week-ends I went with the collectors into mining centres and spoke at Barnsley, Wakefield, and Rotherham, and in some Lancashire towns I visited a number of the Trades Councils. It was a hard time for my wife and three very little children, for they seldom saw their father, who was, as they say, up to the neck in it.

The women strikers established a well-conducted soup kitchen, and the sympathy of the shopkeepers was very broad and the butchers gave their bones and greengrocers and grocers and bakers gave peas, lentils and loaves, and thus children were fed. Every Thursday 200 to 300 cigar boxes would be fastened up, handbills placed over them, holes cut in for coins to be placed in, and these brave women and a number of the men would set out on the Friday and Saturday to mills and workshops, mines and factories, for miles around. Each who went got a shilling and their fares, and when the boxes were brought in on the Saturday afternoon the totals were made up and a distribution followed to the most needy and extra supplies were provided for the soup kitchen. We instituted a prize draw of a big sort, and scores of thousands of penny tickets were sold. The first prize was a £28 piano.

When the time came for the draw, the rumour was set going that the police were going to stop it. So persistent was this rumour that the committee decided that it must be drawn outside Bradford, and as I lived in Leeds they decided that it should be drawn one night at our house, and, accordingly, the committee of about twenty went by road and tram from Bradford to Leeds. The counterfoils of the tickets were placed in sacks and taken in a cart to our house, and from seven at night until seven in the morning, except for breaks for hot coffee and potted meat sandwiches, they were busy rolling up each separate counterfoil and putting it into a huge heap in a part of our big cellar kitchen. When all was completed, my oldest child, a tiny tot of four or five, was brought downstairs and put amongst the counterfoils and kept handing them

out, one by one until the long prize list was covered. I never saw a fairer prize draw in my life. It was all clean and above-board, and I know we were all glad when we learnt that the most valuable prize—the piano—had gone to a widow woman who was in great need and who, I believe, sold it for £24 cash to somebody who knew her circumstances.

Another big event in the dispute was the weekend when the magistrates lost their heads and had brought in special police and soldiers from near-by barracks. There was no need for them. There had been no disorder, no rioting and not many black-legs, and it was a most foolish thing for them to try on. We had decided to hold our usual big mass meetings on the Sunday, one out door and one in the great St. George's Hall. Ben Tillett was one of our speakers. He was to speak in St. George's Hall with Mr. Drew as chairman, and I was to preside at the outdoor meeting outside the Town Hall. This was before the present extensions were made. F. W. Jowett and I had spoken there many times before the dispute was ever created, and it was a recognized open-air meeting place. On that Sunday I had carried the form down from the union office in Peckover Street to the place, and when we got to where the immense crowd assembled we were surprised—at least I was—at the quantity of police about. However, we went on with our preparations in a peaceful fashion, and I planted the form on the usual pitch and got up to open the meeting. I was surrounded with policemen, but I began, "Ladies and gentlemen," when a policeman just pulled me down in gentle fashion. I immediately got on the form again, and was proceeding to get on with my speech when he pulled

me down again. I gave him my name and address and protested at his action, and again got on the form, when he not only pulled me down but gave the form to two policemen who marched away with it to the police station. Perhaps it is best to give the report of one of the newspapers :

" At a quarter before three o'clock comparatively few people were to be seen in the neighbourhood of the Town Hall, except such as were making their way towards St. George's Hall, where the larger meeting was to take place. As the minutes passed, a few knots of people gathered on the causeway and in the road, but not an unusual number. Almost precisely at three o'clock there emerged from behind the Town Hall Mr. Ben Turner, who carried a short form followed by Mr. Haydn Sanders, a strong Trade Unionist, a member of the town council of Walsall, and one or two other gentlemen. Behind and around them were hundreds of men who had failed to get admission to the hall. The form was placed at the end of the square, and Mr. Ben Turner and others mounted it, Mr. Ben Turner beginning to speak. There were only a few policemen visible, but a couple of these approached Mr. Turner and his companions and informed them that they must desist. Mr. Turner continued his remarks, and on the Inspector repeating, ' we cannot allow this,' he quietly took out his card and handed it the officer. One or two other gentlemen did the same, and Mr. Turner was re-commencing his address when he and his companions were hustled off the form. They managed to regain their elevated positions, and then the form was violently overturned by policemen who had converged on the spot. Those who had been on the form were only saved from falling bodily to the ground by the fact that the crowd had pressed close up, and the front rank thus upheld them. Superintendent Paul had by this time put in an appearance, and he took hold of the form, and helped to drag it away from some of the gentlemen who were seeking to retain possession of it."

We couldn't have our meeting. The excitement and danger were intense, and ultimately I persuaded the crowd to march with us to Peckover

Square, a few hundred yards away, and we held our protest there. There was no rioting, no bloodshed, and no real disorder. What bit there was came from the authorities themselves, and I know the police didn't like their job but had to do it. I think it was a brain wave on their part to take the form from under my feet and thus prevent the meeting. Looking on the event afterwards, it seems to me it did prevent a regular "barney."

The dispute went on until well into May, when a number of public men got Sam Lister to bend a little, and a settlement was arrived at. It was really a defeat, and many of the best men and women went overseas to make a new home in a new land. They were lovable men and women who served and worked on that Strike Committee, and occasionally I meet some of them now and they have a kindly word for me and for the time and energy and money I spent in those hectic six months. When it was towards the end they would have a picture taken of the committee with Drew and myself. They also insisted that separate pictures of the two of us should be taken, but as regards my own picture they insisted that I should have it taken in my Sunday suit! I dared not tell them that I had only one suit, but to meet the occasion the picture of myself is one with me wearing a borrowed black coat and waistcoat. This group picture and this separate picture hang in my little home to-day and are prized collections of the most heroic dispute it was ever my lot to be engaged in.

I have been connected with many other Trade disputes, but very rarely did our union or myself create or authorize one; In my early days as a trades union worker, especially in the late 'eighties and early 'nineties, hardly a week went



by without weavers or other textile workers in the West Riding of Yorkshire sending to us for help and advice. We seldom heard of the disputes until a day or two had elapsed, and we never refused to go and help and advise, although in the multitude of cases the operatives concerned were not members of our unions. Usually we insisted that they should join, and in their enthusiasm they would give us their names, pay their sixpence entrance fees, or promise to do so, and we would then enter into negotiations with the firm concerned and often get a settlement, or at many mills a proper weavers' price list drawn up and signed. Alas! in many cases when we had helped them out of their difficulty the women would turn a cold shoulder to the collector when he called at their homes for their contributions. It was a gruelling job, but we kept at it, heartbroken at times, but always persevering at our task. What a joy, however, it was to get a dispute settled up, especially if the new price list was a good improvement. Many a firm would not see us in the first instance, but if the workpeople struck, they seldom allowed them to remain out a week or more, and we won through. There were a few sticklers in the county who would neither answer letters nor allow us in the place.

As we got a bit stronger in our trades union, recognition of the union came with it, but I remember one big firm in Dewsbury asking me to leave the office because technically my colleague had not put in his letter asking for an interview that he and I would have the interview. Of course, I didn't go out, but the employer kept his conversation in negotiations to my colleague and himself. I saw the firm many times in later years, but right up

to the day of his death, the head was an austere high-flyer who professed to be in favour of trades unionism but who hated the union like he would poison. That type of employer is not yet eliminated, but nearly so.

On another occasion I remember asking a firm, in a most courteous note—and I always try to write courteously—to meet us over a proposed wages reduction. The answer came in an unstamped postcard: "We keep a big dog in the yard." This old gent was a character in his way, but he has gone the way of all flesh, and now the firm's workpeople are all trades unionists and his sons are wiser than their old father.

In another little dispute I remember where in one big firm they were changing or revising wages downwards, about seven men went out on their own. We were called in, and the head of the firm, in what seemed to me to be a callous manner, said to me: "I will see the grass grow in the mill-yard until it is as high as my chin before one of these men work here again." He was not of a forgiving or Christian spirit, and his phrase rankles in my mind even to this day, thirty years after the event.

I have a keen remembrance of a dispute in the Dyeing Trade in Spen Valley, when, alas! a number of the strikers were summoned for intimidation, etc. There were no Labour magistrates in those days, and few workmen got justice or sympathy from benches of employers. They were fined fairly heavily. It was the day prior to Christmas Day, and we had a job on to find the money to pay the fines to enable the men to be at home on Christmas Day. They had to go down the "rattle" (prison) that day if the money wasn't paid. We put our heads together

and, with the help of three friendly publicans, we scraped £51 together, and they were released. The publicans were often the only friends of the trades unionists in those days, and practically all the meeting places for trades union branches were in public houses. I think I can truly say that there are few public houses in the textile area of the West Riding in which I did not address trades union workmen from 1886 to 1900. We held them in lodge rooms, in tap rooms, in best rooms or anywhere suitable, for in the late 'eighties or early 'nineties churches and chapels found excuses to prevent our using their schoolrooms and classrooms.

There was one notable exception in Leeds. "Woodbine Willie's" father was the vicar of a church off York Road, Leeds, and he was always willing for us to hold tea-time shop meetings in the church school for just an acknowledgment to the curator. Later on, when we did get permission to hold little meetings in the chapel or church schools in some places it cost us 10s. or 15s. for a half-hour's meeting. Of course, they made no charge, because if they did they would have been liable to pay rates, but they indicated, in a number of cases, that if we had it we must pay even up to 25s. for the use of a place not any better than a public-house club-room. We often wanted to go to non-licensed places because our members were mostly women and young persons, but we did the best we could, and before public-houses became tied houses, landlords and landladies were very good to us, and I do not forget it.

There have been some little disputes in our own trade during the past forty years, but in few have the workpeople been called out by our union, and never then without a secret ballot being taken in

the issues involved. Most disputes have been caused by the employers.

I do remember our union sanctioning a dispute at one big firm after a ballot vote, but the vote went dead against our advice, and the men thought they had the firm fast. It was lost, and the firm won hands down, despite our sticking up for and with the men. I know the firm blamed me for it, but it wouldn't have happened if the men had taken my advice. Sometimes men throw their officials over and sometimes officials get blamed for things they never do, but, of course, someone might say, "What are officials for but to take what is said about them in good part?" That's all right from one point of view, but it isn't always nice, and it isn't always fair.

The big dispute in the Woollen Textile Trade after the Huddersfield lock-out in 1883 was the general lock-out of the woollen and worsted trade in 1925. In this case the employers' associations came before the Industrial Council with a proposal to reduce wages by 10 per cent. This meant, for men about 5s. per week, and for women about 3s. per week. We had several meetings of the Joint Industrial Council, but could come to no agreement. Our deliberations were protracted. I happen to have been joint chairman of the Council since its formation, as well as chairman of the federated workers of our trade, and, along with a few of my colleagues, had to take a big part in the deliberations. It is pleasing to say that despite our acute differences, there was no bad blood or spleen or anger on either side.

During our negotiations we had a 27 hours' continuous sitting, as I felt it was no use our breaking up if there was a ray of hope in continuing our

talks. I presided over both the joint conference and the separate conference of our own side, and kept both my temper and my spirit right to the end until the breakdown occurred. Many of the folks were worn out when the early morning came in, but I tried to cheer all of us with a few dialect rhymes, a few quotations from the New Testament, and in other ways. Odd ones fell asleep, and some awoke a bit on the cranky side, but I did my best to pull them into line. I would have held on another 27 hours to have found a settlement, but it hadn't to be, and a lock-out of three weeks and three days took place.

I don't think I ever worked as hard in my life as I did during those three weeks. We were trying first to move the Ministry of Labour to intervene. Then, every day, and sometimes more than once per day, there were mass meetings to address, and the urgency of the thing kept me going (in addition to good help, advice and physic at home).

Ultimately the Minister of Labour called both sides to London, and again we had two long nights arguing things out, but at last the employers agreed to our request for the case to be put before an independent court—we offered that in the first instance—and was there not great joy expressed everywhere when the ban was lifted and our people went back to work on the old terms until the independent court could sit in judgment and pronounce their recommendations. It was a fair court. The employers chose two big men in Sir Alan Smith and Sir J. Linlithgow; we chose also two big men, Mr. Philip Snowden and Mr. E. F. Wise, and the Ministry of Labour appointed a very fair-minded legal man in Sir Harold Morris, as chairman.

I do not think the employers put their case very well, whilst our case, chiefly presented by my union colleague Mr. Arthur Shaw and myself, was very well prepared. The result was absolutely in our favour.

I hope we never have another lock-out or strike as long as I live. I would far rather have an independent court making its recommendations before a dispute becomes a strike or a lock-out than after one. It is a more sane policy than the other, and in 90 per cent. of disputes I feel sure the other trades union officials will agree with me in that. Even if they do not, that is my opinion.

I have helped in many a trade dispute in our own county in many ways. Generally speaking, I have been a willing handyman in many ways to the other unions as well as our own. When the miners' strike was on in 1893 it was all hands to the pump, and I addressed meetings of miners and demonstrations of the general public week-end after week-end. Great play was made by us all after what was known as the Featherstone shooting, and the late Lord Asquith, then Mr. Asquith, came in for vehement denunciation. I do not think we were always just in our condemnation, but we were in our protests. It is so easy to get up an indignation about a man's conduct in such matters, and be unjust to him in his official capacity. There was no need for the soldiery. There was no need for the shooting, but the blame was more upon the magistracy than upon the Home Secretary. At least, that is my considered view, thirty-six years after the event.

The miners have had many many battles for their rights, and their livelihood, and they were in the right in their defence of wages on that occasion, but it proves what I have said over and over

again, that a strike or a lock-out not settled in the first four or six weeks gets settled on a steep compromise at the end of three or six months. Lord Rosebery is reckoned as one of the chief factors in the settlement of 1893, but the big factor was the worn out condition of both sides. I was privileged to help to feed our own locked out miners and to raise funds and food locally for the few thousands of men in our part of the country.

If there is a Christian man and woman it is Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jessop, of Whitkirk, Leeds. He is a Batley clothing manufacturer (and despite his pronounced atheism, he gives and gives and gives), and in clothing and boots they must have sent hundreds of pounds' worth in those and in recent disputes.

Shortly after that there was a big dispute in the glass bottle making industry in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and the late Andrew Greenwood, the General Secretary, one of the keenest of old-time officials, whilst keeping others off the grass, did give me plenty of rope in trying to help in their hardships, and I begged many packs of flour to be distributed amongst the folks in the Dewsbury area who were affected. What a change has come over the glass bottle world! Then it was a hand-made trade - hand and mouth blown bottles, which needed great skill and care and good health to face the fiery furnace and the molten ingredients. The glass bottle workers in the Wakefield area in their thanks to me sent me five glass blown dumps—"dobs" they called them—beautifully flowered, and also two long glass walking sticks of various kinds of flowering in the long tubes. Some of these things are amongst my cherished mementoes of that long dispute.

## CHAPTER X

### FURTHER TRADES DISPUTES

I HAVE taken some little part in disputes that have occurred in the mining areas.

Dewsbury, Batley and surrounding districts is dotted here and there with coal mines-- thin seam coal mines, and in addition to the great coal lock-out in 1893 I remember we had a long drawn out dispute at Haigh's Collieries, Dewsbury Moor, over thirty years ago.

Our Trades Council took up the case of trying to raise funds to help the Miners and I was very fortunate in being able to collect for them a few dozen packs of flour. As Secretary of the Trades Council and a moderately well-known man in Co-operative circles, I appealed to the Sowerby Bridge Flour Society, the Halifax Flour Society and the Colne Valley Corn Millers' Society and three co-operative concerns, and was able to beg, I think in all, 36 packs of flour, 36--17 stones of flour. It filled many a hungry child's belly and blessed many a home. The dispute lasted many weeks and ere long the pits closed down -- worked out I think, and the firm is now no more.

Another coal dispute I took some part in was the Ravensthorpe (or, as it is now called, Nevin's) dispute.

This lasted nearly a year. It was hotly fought on both sides. Mr. Sam Jacks, the local preacher



and miners' leader, was the checkweighman, and it became very much a personal matter between the firm and himself. There used to be weekly processions of miners and I remember one time marching with the miners and as we went up Robertown Hill Mr. Nevin himself joined and marched with us. He and I had a long talk on the situation as we trudged behind the band and banner. He had a strong bark and at times a decent bite, but he was very generous just the same, and gave very freely towards hard cases amongst the strikers. I think it may be said that the strike was lost. The men drifted back, but Mr. Jacks never got work again. He was a fine old English gentleman, and as straight as a die, but as firm as a rock, and he and Mr. Nevin could never get on together.

I did not take much part in the dispute at Inghams Pit at Thornhill. This was after the big disaster there. I did, however, write Mr. Ingham asking him to be considerate and try to end the dispute. He wrote me a very kind and even generously worded reply but he wouldn't bend. He was adamant.

Another dispute I had a bit of collecting work to do with was the Hemsworth Miners' Dispute with the consequent evictions.

Mr. John Potts (now M.P.), was the chief local miners' leader, and the Federated Trades Council of Yorkshire, of which I was Secretary, pulled its weight in collecting and help. I was able to get from the flour mills a few score packs of flour for the homes, and I know Mr. Jessop, the Batley clothier, became interested and gave away dozens of suits and pieces of cloth to the strikers.

The dispute lasted over four years—one of the longest miners' disputes on record.

The evictions raised a fierce outburst of condemnation. Mr. Potts and his colleagues secured tents in the gasworks field and housed scores of the miners as best they could. It was a trying time for them all and our Federated Trades Councils did their best to help the strikers and their families in every direction possible.

Kinsley village was the Mecca of thousands of Trades unionists and meetings were held there and elsewhere during many of the succeeding weeks.

I have taken part in many disputes in the Textile Trades but most of them have been spontaneous disputes or unofficial ones unsanctioned by the Union. In fact, during my thirty-five years' official connection with our old Union only three strikes were actually authorised by the Union. We were called strike breeders all the same.

My friend Gee and I always tried to settle troubles in a peaceful way. We nearly always managed it. Often the strikers were of and amongst the unorganised people. Usually we heard of the dispute when the weavers or other textile workers were out in the streets, and a telegram or a personal message would come to Mr. Gee or myself saying, "Strike on at ——. Come at once." We generally went and our endeavours were always towards getting a speedy settlement.

During the early nineties we had many such disputes in many parts of the Riding and it usually ended up with a solid advance in wages, an influx of new members, and a better understanding between the employers and the Union. We strengthened our Union by many thousand of members in those early years of the nineties.

## CHAPTER XI

### PRISONS AND PRISONERS

I HAVE not been sentenced to prison yet. When I have gone to prison, it has always been with a pass-out check. I have paid several visits to prisons and convict establishments, but the most appalling sight I ever saw was on the occasion of my visit to Dartmoor convict prison. To see prisoners chained together on their way to and from the quarry and the prison was repulsive. I know it is a difficult problem, but I still think generosity and gentleness reclaim more than repression.

My first visit to a prisoner in prison was in the "nineties" of last century. It arose in this way. One of the Yorkshire miners' leaders in his day was Jimmy Walsh, the Wakefield checkweighman. He ultimately became a checkweighman at South Kirby pit. During his legal contests and law experience—and he had a few—he was summoned for perjury. I believed him to be innocent. He was tried at Leeds Assizes and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.

Along with his wife, I visited him in Wakefield jail, and the cage or wire barrier appliance got my "dander" up. I had a long letter from him one day, written on toilet paper in pencil—about a dozen sheets—giving his views and opinions.

When Jimmy was sent to prison our Federated

Trades Councils and a number of miners' leaders got busy with an agitation for his release. We got up ■ big petition. Some of us saw the Home Secretary, but in vain. Still we kept trying. We held protest meetings in many parts of the West Riding, and I spoke at many of them. In addition to the imprisonment we had to raise £100 as a bond of good behaviour on his release. We got him out ■ few weeks before the time was up, and decided to have a meeting to welcome him from prison and to celebrate his release.

At seven o'clock on the morning of his release there would be a few thousand of us assembled together. A Mr. Baker and I were appointed to go and pay over the £100 to the Governor of Wakefield Gaol, and get him out. We were there promptly at seven. I knocked at the little wicket gate and we were admitted. I said "We want to see the Governor and pay over the money and take Mr. Walsh away with us." Alas! the warder told us the Governor would not be there until nine o'clock. What a blow it was! Away in the distance we could see Mr. Walsh in his prison attire, and yet we had to go back to the waiting crowd and tell the story.

At about 8.45 we were at the prison door again, and promptly at nine the money was paid over and Walsh was free! What a welcome we gave him! What a tribute was paid to him at breakfast! That was the only time I ever paid for any champagne. I did not do it willingly. Mr. Baker was so elated with the proceedings that he ordered a bottle. I was teetotal and had none. When that was finished he ordered another and sent the waiter to me to pay up. I demurred. Really, I hadn't the money, neither had I the desire. After

a lot of arguing he lent me the 10s. 6d. to pay with, but it was the first and it will be the last time I shall pay for such a luxury.

My next visit to Wakefield Gaol was when the prison was used as a works centre to house the conscientious objectors as they were released from their term of imprisonment. They were interned there from 1916 to 1918. They were a mixed body of young men. Some had strong religious faith; some had political scruples; a few were free from scruples; but the bulk were young men of courage and principles.

Bob Smillie, whilst he had two sons fighting, had one son a conscientious objector. Bob told me that one day this son, who was serving sentence at Wormwood Scrubbs, was given five shillings, his ticket to Wakefield, and told to show up at the prison. He had never been in Wakefield, and he arrived there just before eleven at night. There was no escort at all. When he got to Wakefield he inquired where the prison was. The policeman was sarcastic and said "Are you one of those "Conshie b————s?" and directed him to Love-lane. Young Smillie knocked at the door. The warder opened the wicket gate and asked him what he wanted. He told him that he had been sent from Scrubbs, and was taken in!

I visited Wormwood Scrubbs one day to see a C.O. from my own town. He was a brave chap. He didn't look it, as one saw him in everyday life, but he stuck it like a good one, and when I saw him in Wormwood Scrubbs—a hard prison—behind the wire cage, with a gruff warder near by, I felt angry at our brutal prison system, and yet his only complaint was expressed in the words "I am hungry." I cursed when I left that forbidding

building, cursed the system that tortured men of conscience and the system that tortured men's bodies in the hope of reforming their minds.

The next prison scene was not so bad. I went to see Lansbury, Sam March, Susan Lawrence and the other Poplar folks when they were sent to jail. It was more of a tea-party than a prison, for they had commandeered the place and run it on more humane lines than ever dreamt about by Governors or Home Secretaries. It was prison all the same, but they hadn't it as hard or as bad as the ordinary prisoner.

## [CHAPTER XII

### BROADENING OUT

As ■ union official right away back in the middle of the 'nineties, I persuaded our union to widen out its ranks and take in as members all grades of textile workers other than cotton operatives. It took a bit of doing, for there was and is yet some snobbishness in working-class ranks. The weaver was looked down upon by the overlooker, and the foreman with a shilling or two a week more wages did, and in too many cases does to-day, look with some superiority upon himself and down on the other chap in lower wage circles than himself. It used to be in my early days that a woollen spinner and a woolsorter despised the company of men in ordinary grades of labour. Good Lord! we are all common clay, we all spring from a common source and we all end up alike, for as old Timothy says in the New Testament, "We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we carry nothing out." A while ago the woolsorter had his special chair in his special snug at his customary public house and a woolcomber or a labouring factory worker had to be above the ordinary if he was allowed in that place. The same applied in connection with the craftsmen in engineering, etc., but the growth of trades unionism, the friendly society movement and the development of club life with other aids has made Jack as good as his

foreman and as respectable as the superintendent or manager. It's "daft" of any of us to think we are perfect and proper and the other fellow isn't. It's a thin line between the best and the worst of us.

However, when I tried and got our union to agree to take in the guinea a week man and the 12s. a week woman as well as the £2 a week man and the 25s. a week mender, it wasn't all easy, for the spinner felt himself a different class from the piecener, a cog above the weaver, and a long way above the willeyer and fettler who did the hard preparatory work in the mill. It has nearly all worn away but there is some of it left yet. We had to face it and to meet it, and despite my warnings to the men, we had to set up special sections in our union to meet these awkward class circumstances. We have no such divisions now. I had the notion of one union for all textile workers. I have still that notion, and expressed this view in my Presidential address at the 1928 Trades Union Congress. In support of that view, when the noted Knights of Labour of America tried to embrace workers in Europe and in Great Britain in 1882, I joined them, and still retain my rule book. It didn't take root here, but it was the first definite attempt to have a working class Trades Union covering the white races of the world.

Consequent upon our union widening its bounds, we had to cultivate a knowledge of all the departments in the mill. A trades union official who does not try and learn something about his members' trade and calling, technically as well as commercially, isn't worth his place in the movement. This extension also led us into new trade troubles. When I left Huddersfield in 1889 the wages of the



men who had the hardest work and dirtiest jobs in a mill ranged from 18s. to 23s. per week. More had a guinea than 23s., and a few were even paid less than 18s. I had a neighbour, a young married man, employed at a big mill at 14s. per week. One day he plucked up courage to ask the principal for a rise. The answer was "Trade is very difficult, and we can't afford it, but we will see you have plenty of overtime." It used to be common for men in and around Dewsbury and other parts of Yorkshire to work from 6 a.m. to 8 and 9 p.m.—work through from 6 a.m. on Friday morning until 1 p.m. on Saturday—and not get more than 30s. in wages. When I began my efforts amongst them they had 4d. per hour overtime pay: big upgrown hefty men working at 3½d. or 4d. per hour in the daytime and a ½d. or a ¾d. extra per hour for overtime. It took some overcoming. We never ceased our agitation; I was continually addressing shop meetings and out-door meetings.

Our first big move up for the worst paid men was in Colne Valley. The willeyers and fettlers had got fed up. They came out on strike for 5d. per hour and 6d. per hour overtime rates. When they were on strike they didn't know how to proceed, and I got a telegram saying "Come at once. Serious dispute." I went, and hundreds of men were ready to be talked to and advised. My colleague, Mr. Gee, was called in the day following, and we got the union machinery at work. A joint meeting of the employers' association and ourselves met, argued things out, sat one day from 3 p.m. to 2.30 a.m. the next day and emerged with a properly signed agreement of wages, overtime rates, hours of labour, etc., the first ever made in the trade for these classes of men.

The trouble did not end there. The folks in the area in which I lived felt inclined to take the same action, but we convinced them the best way was to try and negotiate a wages agreement. After many mass meetings and some conferences with leading employers, a comprehensive agreement for wages was arrived at, and men who used to be paid 18s. to 23s. per week were lifted to 28s. per week, and the overtime rates were advanced from 4½d. to 5½d. per hour. This was without a strike or a lockout.

A very well-known shoddy district, Ossett, had low wages and poor overtime rates, and no special agreement, and after many attempts we got them to organise in our union. When we got a very representative number, we sent in a request to each employer. They had no employers' association, and each firm had to be communicated with separately. Only two firms replied to our union's communication, and they were not disposed to deal with us. A second and a third communication were sent, with little better response, and we had then to send in a claim for an advance and inform them that we were still ready to talk it over with them but that the men would cease work on a given week-end if the request was not met or negotiations opened up. They ignored us, and the men ceased work. Nearly all the business of this town stopped. Odd ones paid the money, but the bulk would not. Each week we still communicated with the firms, answered inquiries and had consultations, but they had the old Adam in their constitution, and they would not move. When three weeks had gone by, and we were having good financial support for them, the Co-op did a grand thing. The men in dispute were mostly Co-op

members, and the quarterly meeting decided to grant £250 of groceries to the workpeople. This troubled the employers considerably, and when we wrote them individually again they were more free and open, and by certain steps we took we got the late Mr. John Burrett, of the Ministry of Labour, to come down to Ossett and see us and get both sides together. He had one young man under him who came, and after much to-do, got the employers to meet us at a public house not far from the station, and after hours upon hours of talk, for the first time in that town and in that trade, a proper agreement for wages and hours was arrived at. It could have been done at the first if the employers—many of whom had been workmen themselves—had been prudent enough to have the conferences at the beginning. There were some keen, caustic bits of back-chat with the employers, and some were not a little insulting, but it is often good for a man to bite his lip if he is gaining his way in the proper direction, and we knew that we were leading towards a settlement. It is very pleasing to say that many of the employers and I were very good friends afterwards.

After all these troubles, there has been a better spirit of acquaintanceship, if not full friendship, than seemed possible twenty-five years ago, when I used to be slandered and abused by the satellites of the employers and even by some of the employers themselves. It is very nice to know that when the memorial bust of Lord Asquith was unveiled in Morley Town Hall in October, 1928, they asked me to lay one of the two laurel wreaths upon the stand. Possibly my being on various public bodies and my Yorkshire associations has stood me in good stead, and made me more acceptable as a

representative person. I have been insulted and assaulted by employers, managers and heads of departments in my earlier and harder days.

I remember very distinctly in this town of Morley standing on a soap box outside a mill gate and the employer and his foreman throwing clods of dirt over the wall on to our heads. The firm failed in a few months' time, not because of their assault, but because of the low wages and low intelligence.

It is very proper of me to say here that at the beginning of 1890 the wages of men—not foremen—in our textile mills were about 21s. per week, women about 12s., men weavers about 22s., women about 14s. There were odd sections of a few men or women at higher rates. The rates of wages are now, at the beginning of 1929, 54s. 10d. per week for men and 32s. upwards for women. I have had a good deal to do with getting them up to this standard, and certainly it has helped, and not hindered, the employers, for it is always the same; the best wages get the best work and earn the best profit.

I think my big work in the textile areas of Yorkshire has been helping to lift up the wages of our textile folk. It was slogging work getting them interested in trades unionism, but I am thankful to have helped to lift them up a bit.

When we put forward our first claim we went in for 5d. per hour daytime wages, and 6d. per hour for overtime. I appealed to employers privately and publicly. Attacked them at times, maybe unwisely, maybe unkindly, but we got a lively atmosphere, and made trades unionism feared before it became respected.

Mr. Gee and I have visited nearly every mill,

been turned out of offices, been cursed in railway trains, been blackguarded in public places, and damned by those we were trying to help; but we got, after much trouble and patience, the 25s. per week, and the 6d. overtime. Then we went in for 6d. daytime, and 7d. overtime wage. Then time-and-a-quarter overtime pay, extra for night work, and advances for women as well.

The Willeys' and Fettleys' Charter was established in 1910. It was after we had tried to get it going a year or two, when the unofficial strike in Colne Valley set it on its feet. We had made our approaches to the Employers' Association. Ultimately the Board of Trade sent down Dave Cummings to investigate the matter. Sir George Askwith came down to the settlement conference, and after a few days the strike was over and the men had won a standard rate of wages for daytime, overtime and night work.

I remember sitting on until past two o'clock into the morning. First Sir George would meet the men's side, then the employers' side. Innumerable cigarettes would be smoked by him without many words passing his lips. He was a Sphinx-like conciliator, but he held us together as long as ever there was the slightest hope. He understood the psychology of us all better than we did ourselves. It was a victorious finish, although a slight compromise upon our charter.

One thing, however, it accomplished. It made the Heavy Woollen district men try for a similar scale. They got one, and Morley followed suit. At Morley, however, there had to be a strike, but a short one. The claims for the minimum wages were sent in, but the employers had no organization and they did not accede to the request. They did

meet us at last, however, and for a long time we thrashed things out, but in vain, so the workpeople handed in notices and the strike took place. In four days' time it was over, and the rate of wages for the male adults was settled and the scale for young men in the scribbling department fixed up.

There has been little unfriendliness between the union and the employers since the War. Just one or two employers run amok. That happens all over, and more so in these days of very bad trade.

The result of all these movements has been that the male factory worker in the woollen mills in Yorkshire has had his base wages raised from 20s. and 21s. a week by stages until it is now 32s. per week, plus the  $72\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. cost of living wages, or 54s. 10d. per week.

When we had moved the men's wages up we started upon the women's side, and in the war-time we took the case of all the Yorkshire women to the Government Committee, and it was my business to lay down the case. The women got their base wages raised from 11s., 12s. and 13s., to 17s., and later on plus  $72\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. cost of living bonus, or a minimum of 32s. 3d. per week.

The worsted operatives in the county were always "sweated" in their wages at the bottom, and we tackled this section separately. The Worsted Spinners Employers' Federation came into being as a consequence, and it is strange but true that the organizing of the people into trade unions has done more to make the employers organize than anything else. The result of our efforts for the lads and lasses in the spinning departments of our worsted mills has made these underpaid folk entitled to a standard wage far ahead of what was paid to them when war broke out.

There is one positive proof of the value of trades unionism in our wages movements. When we had 30,000 members we could only get 5d. per hour for men's standard wages ; when we got 50,000 we got 6d. per hour. When we got 80,000 we got 7d. per hour. When we formed the combination of textile societies with 200,000 members, we got an Industrial Council and the proper machinery for dealing with wages movements.

Our Industrial Council machinery has been useful from the personal point of view. I have known in the old days of the 'nineties employers when meeting us, take up a very stiff attitude. I have known them break out at meetings into personal abuse, but at our Industrial Council meetings there is no personal rancour, but keen business methods. Afterwards—why, we are as human as other folk, and the old stupid personal unfriendliness is nearly washed out. There are odd employers who still live in the atmosphere of the Middle Ages, just as there are workmen who think a trades union official shouldn't have a drink, or a smoke, or a chat, or have a joke with the employers.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ATTENDING TRADES UNION CONGRESSES

I BEGAN going to Trades Union Congresses in 1890. In those days Trades Councils were eligible for representation, and Leeds Trades Council did me the honour of making me one of their two delegates to the Trades Union Congress held in Liverpool in September, 1890. I was very pleased at the opportunity to go, and it opened up a new chapter in my life's work. There are very few of us now attending Congresses who attended then. These include Thorne, Tillett and Sexton. It was their first Congress, as it was also mine, and the Londoners came with fresh minds, awakened souls, due to the successful formation of the Dockers' Union and the Gasworkers' Union. My old union colleague, Mr. Gee, had been a regular attender to Congresses from 1883, and accordingly he and I pal'd together as we have done ever since, and he could point out to me who was who, and tell me what was what.

It was here that I had my first introduction to the late Harry Broadhurst, the stonemason, the Liberal Labour Member of Parliament and for years Secretary of the Congress. We have had good Secretaries in my time—Charley Fenwick, Sam Woods, Will Steadman, Charley Bowerman and Fred Bramley—but none surpassed Broadhurst



in skill, ability and oratory. My impression of him was chilled a little at the dinner Lady Dilke gave to a few of us. He was somewhat rude, I thought, and snappy with the waiter, but that was, I learnt afterwards, due to his illness (diabetes).

The New Unionism was spreading its wings in the vigour of youth, and the old crafts union men were assailed and attacked, and, I think, educated by the outpourings of Hardie, Mann, Burns and others who took a big part in the debates of the week. It was an education to me, and I listened and learnt, not daring to venture in when the giants were in force. I have been a regular attendee at conferences ever since.

I never dreamt in those far-off days that I should ever become the Chairman of the Trades Union Congress General Council and preside over the Congress and deliver a Presidential Address, but the way is open for others, as it was to me, and I urge all our men to give help and inspiration to the younger generation, so that they may get to the highest unpaid post of honour in our movement.

In a few years' time I was lucky enough to be accepted as a regular active member, and for many years I was either a teller, scrutineer, or a member of the Standing Orders Committee during Congress Week, and ere many years elapsed, I would move, second or support resolutions that affected our trade or the movement.

The idea of a General Federation of Trades Unions was prominent in Congress affairs, and at the Norwich Congress in 1894 a committee was appointed to draw up a scheme of Federation. Some of the older men in Congress—men of weight and importance—were appointed on this committee

by Congress itself, such as the late Robert Knight, General Secretary of the Boilermakers, the late Alex. Wilkie, the Shipwright, the late Harry Wilkinson of the Cotton Weavers' Union, and I happened to be elected as well. This threw me into close contact with some of the old pioneers of Congress, and with reading up and mixing with these folks, I got a good insight into the inside of our movement. Perhaps I was forceful; anyhow I was lucky, and the movement in the larger world has been very kind to me, as I have tried to be of service to it. We drafted a code of rules to put before the next Congress, but the miners who, with the Cotton folks, ruled Congress by their numerous votes, wouldn't have it, and the Federation of Trade Unions on a business basis was delayed. I remember the old Parliamentary Committee, considering it their job, were not pleased at a special committee being set up to prepare a scheme of Federation, and for a time they refused to pay us our fares and out-of-pocket expenses. Ultimately pressure was brought to bear upon them and we were paid fares and 7s. 6d. per day for our expenses.

I remember after one meeting in London going with some of the old giants to have a drink. Fortunately I was a teetotaller, and had my lemonade whilst they had their expensive—so it seemed to me—"special bottle." I declined to join in at the drinks-round affair, for it came to five shillings, and with a numerous family of small children, a wife and a father and mother to keep, I couldn't do it. They were big enough to see it, and we were no worse friends. I have always disliked the plan of paying drinks round, for it has meant, scores of times, men getting one, two and

three drinks more than they could afford to pay for or to take.

At this Congress, when the Federation scheme was turned down, there was also a famous decision made by Congress, and all Trades Councils were excluded from representation. It was a proper decision to come to, and it has been acted upon ever since. It knocked out of Congress Burns, Hardie, Shipton, Broadhurst and a few more, but it prevented duplication of membership, and also checked the tendency for men to arrange to be sent as delegates so that they could use Congress as a sounding-board for their own political and labour fancies.

This Congress was a notable one for keen, caustic, and at times disorderly debate, but it did the right thing, as Congress nearly always does, when it follows the lead of its appointed governing committee.

After this Congress there was an outside attempt to form a Federation of Trades Unions. Mr. P. J. King, backed by Blatchford in the *Clarion*, drew up a scheme of Federation on a financial scientific basis. It was established at a Congress of Unions favourable to it held at Manchester, and my old friend, Bob Smillie, then one of the most vigorous of left wingers, was appointed Chairman. I became Treasurer of the Congress—not of the Federation—and have to-day a balance of 8½d. in hand over Congress expenditure. I have the audited balance sheet amongst my Trades Union archives to-day.

The Federation did not function much, but one section of our present National Union of Textile Workers—the old Warp Dyers' Union—joined it and remained with it the short time it lived. The

Trades Union Congress had nothing to do with it, and later on Congress appointed another committee to report on a scheme of federation and, as a consequence, the present General Federation of Trade Unions came into being. Congress, I feel sure, made a mistake in making it a separate organization. It ought to have been, and it ought now to be a part of the insurance scheme of the Trades Union Congress. It is the legitimate child of the T.U.C., but is living in an illegitimate fashion. Mr. Isaac Mitchell became the first Secretary, my old colleague Mr. Gee was its President, and my present colleague has been for years one of its Trustees. The Miners' Federation never took to it, but I still think insurance federation could be more fully developed if the Congress could find its way to take the Federation under its wing again.

I was present at the famous Congress in Plymouth that brought the present Labour Party into being. Several people have claimed they moved the famous resolution establishing the Labour Party representation committee. The records prove who did it, and all I can say is that it wasn't me, but from then to now I have, I hope, been a faithful member of that Party. I shall have more to say about it later on.

Another notable Congress was that held in Bristol, when Sir James O'Grady, then plain Jim O'Grady, delivered his biological and sociological address. Congress was disturbed that week, for early in the week those of us who lodged near Colston Hall, where the Congress was being held, were awakened to find it on fire. We were burnt out. A fresh hall was secured, but it became more of a patchwork congress than usual.

Up to the Huddersfield Trade Unions Congress

in 1901, it had been customary for the leading local Trades Unionist to be made President of the Congress for the week. At this Congress, owing to local political differences, Mr. Gee was passed over, and Mr. Pickles was appointed. His Presidential Address was a long one. It was a scientific one. It roamed above the heads of Congress delegates, and it was the last time a local man was chosen to be chairman, for the next year the old Parliamentary Committee decided that the Committee Chairman for the year should be Congress Chairman as well. It has worked in general very well.

Another Congress I have reason to be grateful to was the one held in Sheffield in September, 1910. I had been nominated for the first time as a candidate for delegation to the Annual Congress of the American Federation of Labour. Every year Congress sends two delegates, and the American Federation of Labour sends two to our Congress. After a stiff contest, Mr. Brace of the Miners' Federation and myself were chosen. The Miners' Federation with their big votes and with the exchange of votes with other unions were then nearly always sure of their nominee being successful, but our Union was small in numbers. However, Congress elected me, and knowing that the Conference in America was to be held in a few weeks' time, I 'phoned home to our girls and they agreed that my wife should go with me.

At Trades Union Congresses from my first one in 1890 to the changes made in 1920, I had never put up for candidature on the old Parliamentary Committee, first of all because I had no chance against the Cotton vote and the Coal and Cotton combine, and secondly because I always felt that my colleague, Mr. Gee, was the right person to

push forward for that position. On two occasions he won on votes but the old Standing Order that no two of a Trade could sit upon the Parliamentary Committee was in force and he was thus disqualified.

In 1920 the Trades Union Movement had advanced so much that a new system was evolved, and the General Council was established, and I became the first representative of the Textile Group (other than Cotton) and remain the representative at the present time. I have been re-elected unopposed several times. I have had contests two or three times, but luckily on each occasion that a contest has taken place delegates have given me the highest vote any member has ever received. I take it more as a tribute to my faithfulness than to any special ability, and I thank them most sincerely for it.

I trust I may be forgiven for saying that the most wonderful year of all in my Trades Congress career was that of being selected as Chairman of the same. I missed it the year before, Mr. Hicks getting on the first round an equal number of votes with me, and securing the position on a final vote. He filled the office very finely and it was a pleasure to follow his leadership. I don't profess to be clever at chairmanship, but I have had a fair experience in conducting gatherings, but in that year I did not always have a happy time. Every member of the General Council but one was always helpful, and that one came on to the Council with views and notions that he put in the most awkward manner, having little regard for the views and position of the other thirty members.

The Turner-Mond conferences of the past year and a half's time have created considerable inter-

est in this and other countries, but particularly in our own land. In Trades Union circles there has been the fiercest differences of opinion, and a strong and, in some parts of it, an intelligent opposition to the movement having anything to do with the capitalists. In the latter section the intelligent opponents found their opposition on the grounds that the Mond Group of employers were an unrepresentative body. The former class of opponents talked about "Mond Moonshine" and descended to the deepest scurrility in their opposition.

The conferences arose out of a very open speech made by Mr. Hicks at the Edinburgh Trades Union Congress. He flew a needful kite, saying it would be useful for the organized employers and the T.U.C. to meet jointly to consider problems affecting industry. It was a great speech and did him credit.

The employers' associations led, no doubt, by Sir Alan Smith, and others, wouldn't talk. As a consequence, Sir Alfred Mond and Co. got together a gathering of big industrial magnates, and invited the T.U.C. to meet them to talk over industrial relationships.

There were, as I have said, conflicting views on the wisdom of accepting such an invitation. Mr. Swales and one or two more of the General Council of the T.U.C. took the line that the employers sending the invitation were not representing the organization of employers. His opposition was well-founded, but the bulk of the Council, despite Mr. Cook's personal attacks, decided to meet these thirty employers and see what could be done.

I happened then to be Chairman of the General Council, and naturally have known all about the

many joint committee meetings and conferences there have been held.

At the first Burlington Arcade conference we met each other and probably on both sides there was wonderment and no little excitement. I knew most of the employers, but not all ; many of the employers knew some of my colleagues, but not all ; and Sir Alfred Mond and I did our best to get each side introduced to the other before the conference opened.

I remember reading in a paper a criticism of myself because I did the accustomed courtesies. When I can't be courteous to folks it will be time for me to get off the earth. Courtesy is an honour to the man who is courteous, and the country would do with more of it than less.

Anyhow, we got to open conference, Sir Alfred Mond taking the chair and putting in a plain way why the employers had asked us to meet them. What he said was true, namely, that there were two employers' associations in the Kingdom, the Confederation of Employers and the Federation of British Industries, each with different functions, and that of the men we were meeting were some connected with one and some with the other, and some with both, but as the two bodies were not alike, it was felt that there could be useful talks with the T.U.C. and those who had signed the employers' invitation.

My job was to put four points agreed upon by our General Council that day, which included a statement that we would consider all the suggestions, and reply after we had fully considered them.

The meeting passed off satisfactorily. There was one speech, which was expected, which the employers wisely ignored. Our side had several



keen debates later on anent the proposals, and ultimately decided that an industrial committee should be appointed to draw up an agenda and a programme for enquiry, and bring up at a later General Council meeting our findings—our joint findings, if possible. This allowed the Industrial Committee—Mr. W. Thorne, M.P., Mr. J. H. Thomas, M.P., Mr. A. Pugh, J.P., Mr. E. Bevin, the Rt. Hon. R. Richards, P.C., J.P., Mr. W. M. Citrine (the Secretary) and myself—to go on with the job.

What criticism we got ! What vulgar cartoons were issued about us ! What opposition and jeers we had to face ! It was no pleasant job, but it was a right one.

Our first programme was altered and amended, and ultimately jointly agreed upon by the employers' seven and our seven, and put to our General Council and the Employers' group separately and accepted. This programme was and is as follows :—

#### I. THE ORGANISATION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS.

- (a) Trade Union Recognition.
- (b) Collective Bargaining.
- (c) SECURITY AND STATUS.—The formulation of means for increasing security of employment and for raising the status of the industrial worker, including the new standing wage scheme.
- (d) Victimisation of Employees or Employers.
- (e) Legal regulation of hours of labour.
- (f) Management and labour.
- (g) Works Councils.
- (h) INFORMATION. The provision of information on the facts of industry to all those concerned in industry.
- (i) PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION. The application of preliminary investigation into potential causes of industrial disputes before their actual declaration.

- (j) The extension of the function of Industrial Courts.
- (k) Factory legislation.
- (l) Health and Unemployment Insurance (National and Industrial).
- (m) Provision of machinery for suggestion and constructive criticism.
- (n) Maintenance of personal relationship.

## II. UNEMPLOYMENT.

### III. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROCEEDS OF COMMODITIES AND SERVICES.

- (a) High Wage Policy.
- (b) The consideration of plans for the participation by all concerned in industry in the prosperity of their industry and in the benefits of increased production, including shareholding, profit and cost sharing.
- (c) Payment by results.
- (d) Minimum Wage Principles.

### IV. THE ORGANISATION, TECHNIQUE, AND CONTROL OF INDUSTRY.

- (a) RATIONALISATION. The advantages to be gained by the scientific organisation of industries in production, administration, processes, plant, standardisation of product, simplification, scientific costing, elimination of waste in raw materials, power, etc., the greatest possible use of machinery and mechanical power, scientific layout of works. The tendency towards the grouping of industries in large units; the desirability of the development of this tendency towards the promotion of industrial efficiency. The effects upon Labour temporarily and finally of rationalisation, and how those effects could be satisfactorily adjusted by mutual arrangement. Interchangeability or flexibility, elasticity and testing of experimental conditions, demarcation, displacement of labour, compensation, and pensions.
- (b) The effect of unnecessary internal competition.
- (c) Sheltered and unsheltered industries.
- (d) Distribution.

## V. FINANCE.

- (a) Monetary technique. Banking and credit systems and policy.
- (b) Industrial Finance.
- (c) Taxation and Local Rates.

## VI. CONSTITUTIONAL.

- (a) National Industrial Council. The creation of some permanent Standing Committee to meet for regular consultation on matters affecting industry.
- (b) The co-ordination of the present and if necessary the provision of further machinery for continuous investigation into industrial conditions.

## VII. INTERNATIONAL.

- (a) Competition of countries with lower labour standards.
- (b) International Agreements and Conventions.
- (c) International Economic Conference.

## VIII. GENERAL.

- (a) Housing.
- (b) Health problems.
- (c) Education. To see how far the educational methods in vogue to-day can be best adapted to the modern needs of industry.
- (d) Technical education (including apprenticeship).
- (e) Research.

Following this we had more committee meetings and brought out our Gold Standard report in time to send in Lord Melchett's name and mine to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in time for the 1928 Budget. We took advice on this financial subject from Snowden, Graham, Gillett, Dalton and Pethick Lawrence, five of our Labour M.P.s, and Mrs. Blanco White, a great financial expert in herself.

Our second document was on Trades Union recognition; our third on victimization, and our fourth on a National Joint Industrial Council.

I am proud of these documents, especially the last three. Let passion and prejudice disappear,

and all righteous folks in the T.U. world will agree they are landmarks in our industrial history. They are the last documents I shall sign in this committee, as when my successor in the chairmanship was appointed I intimated to the joint committee that he would in future preside at the alternate meetings.

I can truly say that the second joint meeting at Burlington House, at which I presided, and at which these documents were signed, was a most happy one, and I make no apologies and express no regrets at being in at the birth of these proposals.

The Confederation of Employers and the Federation of British Industries have now given an intimation to the T.U.C. to meet them, and the General Council have not only decided to accept their invitation to listen to their difficulties, but have adopted on their side an historic document dealing with unemployment and various palliatives and remedies for this twentieth century evil.

## CHAPTER XIV

### INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES

IN my days I have been to many international textile workers' and other trades union and socialist international Congresses both in this and other countries.

My first venture was in 1894 when the late James Mawdsley and others of us established the International Textile Workers' Federation. This Congress met in Manchester and our Union sent me as one of its five delegates. It was a useful experience, for one learnt that the troubles afflicting Textile Workers in one country were the same kind of troubles as those in other countries. We had a five days' conference and discussed rules, constitutions, movements, men and policies.

I had one bit of experience at this congress that makes me smile now when I think of it. The late James Mawdsley was prime mover of the Congress, and having his Spinners' Union office in Manchester, made all the arrangements for the Congress. He got interpreters, shorthand writers, rooms and other preliminaries settled. He had also to undertake to find hotel accommodation for foreign delegates. We hadn't travelled much out of Yorkshire, so we wrote him about our lodgings, and he transferred all that duty to a man named Byl, a French interpreter, and we were given written

directions to our lodgings. We drove up in a cab—motors were not in being then—and when we drew up at the house to which we had been sent, I said to my colleague, Mr. Gee, "This will never do." It was a street where the cards in the window indicated bed-sitting-rooms 1s. per night, beds 6d. per night. We decided, however, that we must go and see them, and as we entered the doorway I whispered to my colleague, "It smells." It did smell a bit "buggy." We had a short conversation with the landlady, a broken-down looking person who became somewhat cross when we told her we couldn't stay there. We gave her the price of two nights' lodgings to settle up and went to an hotel of our own choosing. I remember mentioning it to Mr. Mawdsley when I saw him, and as a Lancashire man he replied, "Well, anything will do for a Yorkshireman." He took it more as a joke than a fact, but, by Jove, it did smell!

Mr. Harry Wilkinson of the Cotton Weavers' Union became our International Secretary, and he kept it until years after, when we met in Italy.

There used to be some fierce controversies between we Lancashire and Yorkshire men. They were for the retention of half-time labour. My colleagues and I were against it. We were for peace and no more war. They were the super-patriots of Britain. They always had us on toast, however, on the matter of trades organization. They had good membership and we had a poor following. That did not prevent my sticking up for Yorkshire and for the abolition of half-time labour and for International Arbitration and Disarmament. I nearly always had the delegates of other nations on my side.

I remember one incident very well at our Berlin

Congress. It was during the Boer War, and feeling was somewhat anti-British. I didn't perhaps feel it as much as some, for I was against the Boer War, and never retaliated when at home people called me a pro-Boer. I was as pro-British then as I am now, but did not and do not believe in war. In Berlin, two of our Lancashire delegates had got merry and were marching towards the hotel in Dresdenstrasse singing and going on as if they owned the world. A police officer went up to them, to get them to be quiet, I suppose. He couldn't understand their language and they couldn't understand his, but one of them pulled out his passport to which he had pinned on the hotel address, and said, in choice Lancashire language, "Look here, my lad, touch us if tha dar' (dare). Si thi (see thee) this is signed bi Lord Salisbury, an' he's next to th' Queen o' England." The passport kept the officer silent, but like a true internationalist, on seeing the address they wanted, he piloted them to the hotel and left them guessing that a German wasn't so bad after all.

It was at this Congress that I had an experience of militarism and anti-labourism in concrete form. At each Congress session we couldn't start until the officers of the State (soldiers or police, I don't know which they were) had taken their seats upon the platform. The Congress could only be held by permission of the almighty Kaiser. It did seem so unfree to us. However, the Congress went on its way, and our Yorkshire resolution condemning war in all its phases and militarism in general went through with just a few grunts of opposition from some old-time Lancashire-man.

We ultimately discussed the question of the abolition of half-time labour. We went in for the

raising of the age of work for children to fourteen years. The late Mr. David Holmes, one of Lancashire's best trades union weavers' officials of his period, attacked myself and the Yorkshire delegates in general. He was not at all merciful. At such Congresses one could speak twice, or sometimes more, on any subject, and I replied to his scorn with equal scorn, and we got (so it seemed to the officers on the platform) pretty warm. After one of us had spoken and the interjections between the Lancashire and Yorkshire delegates had been pretty hot, the officers closed the meeting and we had all to turn out of the conference hall, and when we English folks got into another room and were smoking our pipes and chatting and wondering why the Conference had been shut down by the "bobbies," we were informed by old Liebnicht, who was then living and could speak to us in our own language, that the officers, fearing a row between the Lancashire and Yorkshire delegates, and that disturbances would follow, had closed it down in the interests of peace. Good Lord! we were at peace, for we were as friendly personally as could be, but these "bobbies" couldn't understand how keenly we could argue and interject and yet be personally as we were on the best of terms. I never believed in freedom more than I did that time, and was glad we had no such silly system of spite and prying and slavery as existed in Germany then. I have been to conference there since the War, and they have their conferences quite as freely as we have here. They are freed from the cankerdom of Kaiserdom, and I hope they remain so.

I have a recollection of the conference at Milan for it was here that I became Secretary of the



International for about three hours. The late Mr. Wilkinson and the Continental delegates didn't agree on some point of policy and Mr. Wilkinson resigned. The whole of the continental nations attending nominated me for the Secretaryship. The Lancashire Section protested against it, and the Conference adjourned for lunch. During the lunch-time the Lancashire delegates were furious with the position, as they wanted the Secretaryship, so I consulted my own Yorkshire colleagues about it, and when Congress resumed after lunch I declined to accept the post. Mr. Marsland, of Ashton, was later on elected, and because of his knowledge of languages, made a better International Secretary than I could have done.

We visited a few mills whilst in Italy, on that occasion, and what struck me then, and has struck me in foreign countries since, is the fact that for the same kind of machines and the same kind of material, they have a bigger staff of employees than is needed or employed in England. I found nearly twice as many in a cotton spinning mulegate than as operated in England, and, strange to say, visiting France and its textile mills again in 1925 and again in 1927, I found there were more people employed per unit of production than here. They don't work as hard in general and there is just as much freedom and less haste there than here. They may earn less money, but I have not yet found, except in one or two special instances, that they produce a pound of yarn or a yard of cloth on cheaper production costs than do our Yorkshire mills.

I remember on one occasion coming home from a textile international, calling at textile mills both in Holland and in Belgium, and it seemed some-

what amusing to me to see the lackadaisical or the leisurely style of working, and some of the operatives in a mill visited very recently were smoking away at their work—a thing never thought of or that should or would be allowed in our textile mills at home.

At one of our International Textile Workers' Congresses held at Amsterdam in 1911, I wrote the following anti-war, but international brotherhood, lines. I don't put them in as poetry, but as sentiments I expressed in my way, for it has been my lot at most of these international congresses of our trade, as it was at the last one held in Ghent in 1928, to move a resolution of disapproval of war.

Comrades from all climes are meeting,  
Words of cheer to each repeating,  
French to German gives true greeting,  
Each uniting for the right ;  
Comrades, who to live must labour,  
Loving each his working neighbour,  
Using tongue and pen—not sabre,  
Workers of the world unite !

Once the workers were but cattle,  
Ordered out to wicked battle,  
Heroes then, mid cannons' rattle,  
Fighting without hope or aim.  
Changed the tune and changed the story,  
War's mad visions, wild and hoary,  
Flee before proud peace's glory,  
And no more we prize war's shame.

Creed and caste are disappearing,  
International feuds are clearing,  
Hope and joy for all is nearing ;  
Help it, brothers, in your might !  
Hail ! all hail !—the day is breaking,  
Tyrants on their thrones are shaking,  
Brotherhood is in the making—  
Workers of the world unite !

One of the earliest Socialist Internationals I went to was in London in 1896. It was, I think, the second of the reconstituted Internationals after the breakdown of the Working Men's International Association. What a bear garden it was! We met at the Queen's Hall, and the anarchists were determined they would not leave the Congress, even when Congress had declared that anarchists were not eligible to a Labour and Socialist International. Knives were flashing as the delegates got on to the seats to declaim their protests and to expose their passion. One man even flourished a revolver. There were some noted men at this Congress, but the man who kept calm the most and whose influence by the tact displayed counted most was the late James Mawdsley. It took the Congress at least three days to settle down to discuss international problems, but it made the British Trade Union Congress take care that before they went into another one they would have conditions defined and delegations made safe. I have been to several internationals under the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress auspices since then, and they have got things in business fashion, not exactly on the British plan, but on a better plane than they used to be.

I remember going to one international at Basle, in 1913, I think it was, and 'twas there that the famous cathedral was used the first time for a Socialist peace demonstration. On the Sunday forenoon there was a great procession, and Keir Hardie and I walked in front of the British section, the French leader Jaures walked in front of the French section, and Bebel, I believe, did the same in front of the German section. All Europe was represented, and in the afternoon the great

cathedral was packed to overflowing, whilst from the huge stone pulpit the Labour leaders of Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland and Britain spoke to the great assembly. It was a glorious gathering, and a year before the Great War broke out we were pledging loyalty to the No More War Movement. At the Congress in Basle during the week we were passing resolutions unanimously in favour of a general strike against war.

Alas, my heart was nearly broken in July and August of 1914. Our own textile workers' international congress was held at Blackpool in July of that year. What a joyous time we had! There was no disharmony amongst us at all. We pledged ourselves anew to peace and against war. "*Guerre de guerre*" was the cry of the French, the spoken message of the Germans; whilst I, as usual, took the absolute peace line. To this there was no disagreement. We feasted each other, we played bowls and cricket and had our socials, and yet, within six weeks of our being together, a French delegate and a German delegate had each passed away owing to the war that broke out on August 4th.

At our last international in 1928, at Ghent, we all of us, French, Belgian, Danish, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Indian, British, etc., again pledged ourselves to peace, and my motion against all war was unanimously agreed to. I hope we all keep it. I shall.

I have been to various sorts of conferences in foreign lands. It was my good fortune to go to the Peace Conference in 1900, at Paris, when the late Randall Cremer, M.P., fixed us all up as delegates at some hotel on the opposite bank of the Seine. We had a fine reception at some hotel on the Saturday night, and it was on this occasion

that I heard Jaures for the first time. What an orator he was ! I don't know the French language, nor do I know what he said, but his spirit touched mine and my British colleagues', and we felt richer by his talk.

Here I had a little touch of loneliness that was soon dispelled. My three colleagues were folks who knew a bit of French, but not enough to know they didn't know it. One of them guided us miles out of our way, and I had become so tired with the hot causeway that I jibbed, and, going to a gendarme, pointed to a card and said, "I want to go there." This was in the Montmartre district, to a special café recommended in a guide book written by "Dangle" of the *Clarion*. The gendarme pointed out the street, and we went in two minutes, after our expert home-made linguists, with map and enquiries, had trailed us miles out of our way.

At this café they had to pay for their lunch as they went in, and they gave us each a ticket for the table at which we were to sit down. Alas ! I was at one table along with a stranger, and my three friends were at another table. There were six or seven courses, and I didn't know what the man said when he served me with soup or with fish or with salad, but at about the third course I said, sotto voce, "Oh, damn it." Immediately a lady at my left said, "I think you come from Yorkshire." Wasn't I glad to find an English tongue ! This lady kept a shop in Montmartre, but came from Shipley, in Yorkshire. After the meal we all had a chat, and she gave us guidance and instructions how to go on to the places we wanted to visit, and my little bit of profanity was in itself very useful.

I remember being a bit nonplussed one day at Zurich. I was attending our International Textile Workers' Congress there. It was terribly hot, and the sun poured down mercilessly upon us. My friend Gee and I had hard bowler hats in those days, so we decided we would buy a straw hat each. I asked Miss Ford, of Leeds, who was often a co-delegate with us, what I must say to the shop woman to get to know the price. It was ——. I put on my finest behaviour, and, after choosing the hat, I said to her, in dumb language style, "——." I guess I mullocked it, for she only shrugged her shoulders and said "Nein, nein." I tried again, but more methodically and much slower, and again she failed to comprehend, so, in my despair, I said "Hang it all, hah mich?" In an instant she replied, "Seven marks," and, by jove, she was an English-woman, and I had been practising a kind of dead language upon her! I always try folks in English first now, and if that doesn't do it, sometimes the Yorkshire language as well.

## CHAPTER XV

### FOUNDATION OF THE I.L.P.

I HAPPEN to be a foundation member of the Independent Labour Party. Prior to its formation I had taken part in developing Labour Party work, but when the call came to appoint a delegate to the first I.L.P. Conference at Bradford in January, 1893, our Batley Labour Party, which always met at our house, appointed me to attend. For many years our house was the official centre for all the local Labour movements, both industrial and political, and for over thirty years it has been an open door to all the advanced movements.

I went to this conference with anticipation and hope for we were all imbued with the need of Independent as distinct from Liberal Labourism. The meeting was held in the Labour Hall, Peckover-street, Bradford, a building that was becoming historic in so far as it was the centre of Bradford Labour activities arising out of the Manningham strike, and also because it was the centre for our own Trade Union in the Bradford area.

The Congress appointed Keir Hardie its first Chairman. Another Scotchman was fixed upon as Secretary, and a standing orders committee was later fixed up to examine into the credentials of delegates. This had been made necessary because the Fabian Society had sent two dele-

gates, the late W. De Mattos and George Bernard Shaw. Some of the delegates objected to their status as delegates, and they were asked to withdraw until the point was reported upon. As a consequence, the delegates were given an address from the visitors' gallery by G. B. Shaw on why and wherefore he and De Mattos should be accepted as delegates. It was a rare treat, but many of us were serious and did not like the "Liberals" wanting to join in the formation of an Independent Labour Party. However, later in the day the Standing Orders Committee dealing with credentials gave in their report and recommended their admission. I know I voted against their admission, and whilst I think I did right then, I am glad we have had G.B.S. helping all these years to preach and teach Socialism and the development of the I.L.P.

The movement spread into various parts of the realm, and up to three or four years ago was a big power in the councils of the Labour Party. It can be again with the I.L.P. stopping nagging at our leaders and with ceasing to include in their mission debatable topics like Birth Control, Sex complexities and things that are extraneous to a political Labour Party whose prime function is to teach, preach and develop Socialism and not overwhelm the movement with fanciful fads that are distracting and in many cases nauseating to refined minds and ordinary decent family traditions.

I helped to form very many branches of the I.L.P., especially in Yorkshire. It was the strongest area in the country, although Lancashire and Scotland ran it a good second.

I never regretted those days. They were the days of soap box and street corner oratory. There



was no pay for the job. Many of us have travelled many miles, spoken at a Sunday morning meeting, had a snack meal in a coffee house, gone to an afternoon meeting elsewhere, had tea with a comrade, done another meeting at night and gone home poorer and prouder for our task. There was real joy in the work, and to-day I speak at scores of meetings free of charge or cost and have the same joy as in those days, 35 years ago. I am also proud I have a founder's certificate given to foundation members over a year ago, and I am doubly proud, for my wife is also a foundation member, and a certificate holder like myself. Having worked for it, having held many shares in the old *Labour Leader* and lost some bit of our savings, we don't—I speak for my wife and myself now—want to see the I.L.P. frittered away. There are a lot of folks yet to convert to Socialism, and that was the aim and object of the founders of the I.L.P.

Tom Mann was once the Secretary of the I.L.P. but was not very restful in his movements, and after being candidate for Colne Valley and writing our Textile Union a pamphlet—and a good one—on an eight hours day for Textile Workers, he became interested in other movements and John Penny, the school teacher, became his successor.

Penny did some delving work for the I.L.P. for years when it was poor and despised. John is now a C.W.S. director.

Francis Johnson took on when Penny laid down the office, and a more satisfactory secretary the I.L.P. never had. He still works in the I.L.P. office and whilst his successors have been and are able young men, I don't think they have outclassed him.

The organ of the I.L.P. was the *Labour Leader*, Hardie's *Labour Leader*. Sometimes, looking old documents up, I look longingly on the share certificates we had in this venture. I have never had the love for the *New Leader*, as the old *Labour Leader* is termed, anything like that I had for the old paper. It is more scholastic, but also more crotchety. It is better illustrated, but not as "newsy," and it is not the *Labour Leader* I loved, nor the *Labour Leader* it should be.

The change of name disappointed me and I voiced my disappointment at a conference about three years ago.

I hope to remain an I.L.P. member my life out, but at times I dislike its political jumpiness.

I believe the green book of the nineties, the Cook-Maxton outburst of the twenties, helped then, and help now to retard its progress, but if the I.L.P. is needed it will live and do its propaganda work for Socialism.

What a stride it is from the formation of the old S.D.F. in the early eighties, and which I joined in 1886, to the Labour Government in 1924.

The old S.D.F. was born out of hunger and travail as a protest against the evils of social society. It was the successor of the old Chartist movement, just as the Trades Union Congress was the successor of the old Working Men's Association. It led to early splits, for just as serious minded reformers become fanatical in their faith and beliefs, so do breakaways and splits occur.

Then came the old socialist society of William Morris and Co., for the hardbacked Hyndmanites and Quelchites didn't fit in with the more intellectual ruggedness of Morris and Co., and so the formation of the Socialist Society came along.

Again, this was followed by the Fabian Society which gave an economic intellectuality to the cause of socialism. The founders were keenly connected with the Liberal Party and as such were much suspected by the new Labourites and the old S.D.F. I belonged to all these bodies, neither caring much for the dissensions or the dogmatism. They were permeators.

I happened to be the Treasurer for a time of the Yorkshire Fabian Society. It slept away when the I.L.P. came along.

The S.D.F. and the I.L.P. were not at first too friendly to the orthodox Trades Union movement, nor were the chiefs of the Trades Union movement much enamoured of the I.L.P. but the I.L.P. grew and permeated the Trades Union movement. With the I.L.P. fighting forlorn hopes in by-elections and general-elections, the fighting spirit brought into the Trades Union movement men who were determined to make a Labour Party out of the warring elements.

In 1900 the Trades Congress after many ventures decided to form the L.R.C. as the Labour Representation Committee was first named.

MacDonald was the great find for this body and he piloted the ship into safe harbour by his mighty organising intellect and his faithfulness. Of course, it was not the work of any one man. Hardie was a great promoter of the faith but it is safe to say the moving spirits were the Trades Union independent labour men who went as delegates to the Trades Congress.

I have many happy recollections of work upon that Committee. I think it was its second year of coming into being that Conference elected me on the Committee, and after a year off, I seemed to

become a permanent feature, being re-elected for seventeen or eighteen years in succession until I retired to go upon the general council of the T.U.C.

There are happy recollections of our Committee meetings being held in MacDonald's little study at Lincoln's Inn Fields where we sat where we could. I have sat upon the coal-scuttle and seen men who became Cabinet Ministers using the same domestic box for the same purpose.

Mrs. MacDonald was a great woman, slim of build and motherly in outlook, sisterly in attention, she made us all feel homely and at home. She began having little receptions or At Homes—to welcome folks from the Homeland and from foreign lands and thus gave me a helpful introduction to many notable people from nearly all parts of the world. Bless her memory, she was a joyous creature. I remember after one conference in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street, London, a few of us said to MacDonald at the close, "Look here, you have had a hard day, have a night off with us, and we will go to the White City." After a few minutes he agreed if Mrs. MacDonald would go. The telephone was put into action and she agreed to meet us in the lobby of Exeter Hall, and they two, J. Sexton, M.P., and I had a delightful time together. She went on the various mechanical attractions, joined us at supper, and we were the merriest of the merry, and I think it did her good. I did not know until later on that year that she was even then stricken with illness.

When MacDonald became a member of Parliament, she and the two boys, Allister and Malcolm, were in the lobby, and after a chat she asked me if I would take the two lads up into the Strangers' Gallery, so that they might see into the House of

Commons. I did so, and looking from the Gallery into the House, I pointed to where the twenty-nine Labour men were to sit, and they soon picked out their dad, who in later years was to become the big leader of the Party and Prime Minister in the first Labour Government.

When Mrs. MacDonald was on her death bed, the Labour Party Executive, then meeting in Newcastle, instructed Mr. W. C. Robinson and myself to go to London and to carry their sympathy. We arrived at Lincoln's Inn Fields shortly after her death. We sympathised as best we could with the stricken household. MacDonald carried out her wish that he should, whilst she was lying at rest at home before the funeral, write his story of her life, and in his anguish he did so, and there is no finer literature in the British language than his tribute to his wife. I was thankful to get a copy presented to me, and I cherish it, not alone for its beautiful language, but because of my high respect for a good woman, wife and mother, and the honour the husband paid to her.

When all was over, the Movement got up a tribute to two women who worked in harness for the love of child life, namely Margaret MacDonald and Mary Middleton, and thus the first Baby Welfare Clinic came into existence.

Mrs. Middleton died just previous to Mrs. MacDonald. They worked together very ardently, just as J. S. Middleton—"Jim," as we call him—worked like a Trojan to help MacDonald in his work. Just as MacDonald was the mainspring in the creation of the Labour Party, Middleton has been and is the silent but strong worker behind the scenes.

Middleton is a delightful writer and should do

more public writing than he has at present time to do. He is a very correct and beautiful speaker, and is one of the very best informed men in our Labour movement. For MacDonald and the late Mrs. MacDonald, he has an affection that is splendid. Mr. Middleton came first as MacDonald's private secretary, then on the creation of the L.R.C. he became MacDonald's assistant, and he has been in office right from the beginning.

Mr. Henderson, M.P., has in Middleton, a right hand man who is of immense service both to him and the movement.

The old L.R.C. changed its name to the Labour Party a few years ago. The Party growth is phenomenal. There were four Labour M.P.s prior to 1906, 29 in 1906, 42 in 1910, 151 in 1922, 199 in 1923 and 156 in 1924. The votes have risen from a few hundred thousands to nearly six millions in 1924, and I guess before the election it will have risen to nine millions in 1929.

During the war there were factions and enmities. Some were peaceful and some were not, but the old wounds soon healed up. Odd little men like Parker, Seddon, Roberts, and Sims got politically lost, but the staid, solid thinking men kept their feet inside the Movement, and it is now the second if not the first party in the State.

All the Party talk about Nationalisation of Women, Atheists, Infidels, etc., is now worn out for the Labour Party has amongst its leaders, more local preachers, more teetotallers than any other party can number, and whilst there will be a mental scallywag or two in our midst, the Movement compares favourably in honour and honesty with any other of the old parties of the State. Labour stands for cleanliness of mind, body and soul.

My first real bit of public work was slight, but it gave me an insight into some details. I lived at Primrose Hill, Huddersfield, and many reports were common that the Registrar of Births and Deaths was not meeting the needs of the public as nicely as he should. He lived at the Berry Brow end of Fenay Bridge, and Almondbury-end residents had to walk long distances to register births and deaths. There were complaints that some had had to come again when they were a little late, etc. There was a committee appointed. I was on it. We held meetings. We protested then. We had a deputation to the Guardians. We met the Guardians and argued our case, told them that when the Registrar was appointed it was on the understanding that he should have a place in the centre. They admitted it and ordered this to be done. We won. However, they won for they advanced his salary to cover cost of rent of the new place and so he won. They won and we won and it ended thus.

This was as it were only a trial bit in public life but I have had a very full life in public affairs during the past thirty-seven years.

I stood as a Labour candidate for the School Board at Batley in January, 1892, and despite my short seven months' residence there, I was third on the poll. I remember how timid I was when some of my Trades Union and Labour colleagues asked me to stand, but I seemed to be the only one likely, and we went in and won, and I retained my connection with it as member and vice-chairman until school boards went under.

The board was divided into four parts—the Liberals, or Nonconformists, the Churchmen, or Conservatives, the Catholic Priest—a real trojan for his folks—and myself.

At that time education was broadening out, and a new type of school was built there, known as a higher grade school. The Nonconformist majority decided that scholars should pay school fees for their tuition, and the vicar and I joined forces to make it a free school. We two fought the majority of the board incessantly, but lost and lost again. We then decided to take it a step higher, and went to the Board of Education with our case. Each time we were about to bring it forward for discussion before the board the vicar called at our house and we made our plans, and every legitimate artifice we knew was tried, but the Board of Education settled it for us, and declared that no fees were to be charged. Three of the Board, as a protest, resigned from the Board, but that did not matter. The school was free, and remained so until it was created a secondary school under the control of the County Council and the local Education Committee of the Town Council.

My next venture into public work was in November, 1893, when I stood as the first Labour candidate for our Town Council. My first election address is not so much out of date to-day as it would seem by the efflux of time. There are odd bits to bring up to date and odd bits have been won over, but in it I said then and say now :—

" If elected, I would, if opportunity presented itself, oppose any more back-to-back houses being built in already crowded places. Scientists of the highest character are against back to back houses, and having lived in them I appreciate their wisdom and judgment. Property owners and men of means don't live in back to back houses, nor at the rate of 200 persons to the acre as in some places in Batley, and there is no need and no reason why the workers (who are of the same flesh and blood as they), should be



crowded in unhealthy dwellings. I would go in for artisans' dwellings on the most improved principle.

"I am an advocate of wide streets, and big causeways, good lighting, paving flagging, and sewerage, and would also favour a proposal to place trees in our streets, and seats to sit on, believing that it would be conducive to the happiness and comfort of the inhabitants.

"The genuine unemployed should have my sympathy, and, if it were possible, I would go in for work of a useful character being found them at men's wages.

"I would favour the reduction of public-houses, and beer-houses, believing that there are too many, from either the public or a publican's standpoint. I would, however, insist upon due justice being done to bona fide tenants. No settlement of the liquor question, however, to me, is satisfactory that does not provide for the town itself being its own public-house of refreshment, and entertainment keeper, so that by the natural order following good Government, adulterated drinks of all kinds can be abolished and drunkenness, crime, and immorality reduced.

"I would favour a proposal that would tax the ground landlord for improvements done to—what he calls his land—by other people, and I think it a moral crime that any man should manipulate land for his own, and not the country's good. If elected I would do my best for the borough and its inhabitants.

It was a keen contest. The Mayor-elect and an ex-Mayor and myself contested for two seats, and I won. There were some rough things said about me by my opponents' supporters, but I have forgotten some of them and forgiven them all. I have remained a member of the Town Council without a day's break from then until now, being technically the "Father of the Council."

In those early days I got plenty of oratorical battering from the leaders in the Council, and as I got no mercy I gave little back. I was charged on many occasions with talking to the gallery. In fact, that was a stock phrase of some of the heads who resented labour having a say or a look in.

THEY CONQUER WHO BELIEVE IN THEM.

THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE AT BIRMINGHAM, 1912

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They were anti-trades unionist, anti-labour, anti-socialist, but more anti-Ben Turner. Perhaps I was too vigorous to convert them, and they were too dominant to "cow" me into their lines of policy.

At that time we had controversies on back-to-back houses. None are built to-day. We had very little of a water-closet system at that time, and I worked hard until the old unhealthy privy midden system went by the board. We had scores of unpaved back yards, and this was made one of my planks of action, and 95 per cent. of them are now paved and decent. Then our infantile death rate was 156 per 1,000 born. It is down to under 80 to-day. One of our pet things was the abolition of gas meter rents, and year after year I had a motion down to abolish the same. It took ten years to succeed.

At the early part of my career, both on the School Board and on the Town Council, I tabled a resolution for the adoption of the Fair Contracts clause being inserted in all public contracts. It seems so puny a thing to-day, but thirty years ago it was a real live public issue. It received considerable opposition, but our Trades Council kept the subject alive, and sent deputations to plead their case. In a few years both School Board and local Town Councils adopted the clause, and they are in operation to-day in practically all parts of the county and country. Our Federated Trades Councils of Yorkshire—the first in the country—went wider than the local bodies, and we asked the West Riding County Council to adopt such a clause in all its contracts. I remember being sent on a small deputation to that august assembly, when the late Marquis of Ripon was chairman of

the County Council, and I must say he helped me materially as I put the case before them. He had been one who, as a Minister of State, had supported the idea ere Parliament passed its notable resolution in favour of a Fair Contracts clause. We did not win our first attempt, but kept at it, and the legal heads ultimately drafted what gave us our request, but was clothed in less simple language. I remember we had big debates at Batley before I succeeded, but nowadays nobody would think of letting a public contract without the clause in it that the contractors or sub-contractors must pay the standard rate of wages, and as the standard rate is now the rate fixed jointly by the trades unions and the employers' associations, one can see how useful it has been to prevent sweating and undercutting such as existed before.

I remember two very serious outbursts of small-pox, one over thirty and one over twenty years ago, and in the latter one I happened to be vice-chairman of our Health Committee. The Chairman being away in America, the doctor and the inspector were in constant touch with me. Really I was getting a surfeit of cases, for there were clothes getting destroyed in disinfection, wages lost by keeping contacts away from their work, and I was glad when the hectic time went by. Although I am not yet satisfied that vaccination is a preventative, I took the advice of the medical officer, and had myself revaccinated. My arm was red and swollen from the wrist to the shoulder for several days, and even to-day, in some kinds of weather, the old vaccination spots give a twinge that seems a cross between rheumatics and imagination.

When I had served about ten years I was made an alderman of the borough. There were other

three Labour councillors by then, and we had hammered hard at the theory that every alderman, when he had gone his six years, should go before the electors to see if they wanted him. Thus I was slipped in that year because I was representing a new and vigorous party, who claimed to have one seat for every three councillors belonging to that party.

When I had served my six years as an alderman, I went before the electors, getting elected as ■ councillor on the 1st of November, although my term as an alderman did not expire until the 9th. I happened to be out of the country, and despite the efforts of my colleagues to get me made an alderman again, they lost, for the opponents knew that if I were elected, we could get another Labour Councillor elected in the ward I represented. I served many years again as a councillor, and was again made an alderman eight years ago. When my term was up I decided again to seek re-election as a councillor, and despite the keenest of opposition—personal and political opposition—I was head of the poll. The Council made me an alderman again two years ago.

No man is better known in the town than myself, for up to recent years I had all sorts of personal attacks to face from chapel and Liberal Club particularly. It wouldn't have mattered much to me, but they fought me through my family.

One time I was a candidate, and at the chapel my young children went to the local preacher—a local "big-wig"—publicly urged the congregation not to vote for "that man across the road"—I lived opposite the chapel. I am proud that my two girls—not then in their teens—got up, walked out and ceased to attend there.

Years after, in a Parliamentary fight, another of my daughters was at another chapel where the preacher urged his chapel audience to vote for the Liberal candidate. She felt it keenly, and got up silently, walked out and left. A deputation from the Sunday School came to wait upon her, to plead with her to go back. One young lady said, "Have we done ought wrong to you?" My daughter replied, "You haven't, but my father is my father, and I am not going to a chapel where the minister attacks him."

I have enjoyed town council work and enjoyed the friendship of many aldermen and councillors, some were neither just nor fair, and they got at times a Roland for an Oliver.

When I had served twenty years on the Council, the then Mayor died—this was in early January, 1914—and as we left the churchyard three of the chiefs of the Council mentioned that they thought I might take the office. Possibly they imagined a short term would be sufficient. A deputation came to see me at our house, and I think it was on January 9th they elected me Mayor. I didn't have a banquet, but gave them a high tea. I provided cigars but no intoxicants. Having no regular place of worship, it seemed right to make the vicar chaplain to the Mayor, and for two years and nine months the present vicar did his job very well. We had the usual mayoral Sunday's procession to church, and what a crowd there was to see "their Ben," as they then called me and do call me, go to church in state, and up to then the collection for the hospital was the biggest ever collected on a Mayoral Day. Our Union were good to me, and told me to attend to the job.

Alas! then came the War. We had had another



MAYOR OF BATLEY, JANUARY 1914

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mayoral visit, this time to a Baptist Chapel, on the Sunday when war was being declared. From the Baptist Chapel I went to a scratch meeting of several thousands of folks in Dewsbury Market Place at night—called by chalking the causeway—and despite being mayor, I spoke vigorously for Great Britain being neutral. That evening this big crowd were mostly with us, but the war came, and a tough four years followed.

When war was taking place, the Town Clerk and I got meetings called to deal with the anticipated distress, and no effort was spared by my wife and family to do everything for the folks implicated in the war.

I had to do some things foreign to my nature, but, being Mayor, I did them. Receiving Generals and high potentates who visited our town, welcoming Crooks and Brace and military chiefs of varying character. I had to welcome men home on leave, and one incident sticks in my mind. A captain had come to the town hall, and we got talking about the muck and filth of war, and "chats." He dropped on his haunches, tailor-wise, and said that practically everybody did as he showed me, namely, searched the seams of their clothes for the little "devils" that were the bane of the troops, especially in the early days of the war. I had to attend the funerals of early victims, and visit the stricken homes. It was proper work to do under those tragic circumstances, and my hours and my purse were used to the fullest degree. I must have written hundreds of letters to the lads away, dealt with many a vexed problem, settled a few matrimonial difficulties, and whenever a draft had to go away, I did my best to cheer them

up, always advising them to write regularly and often to the folks they had left behind.

When I had served my third term as Mayor, I felt it time to inform my colleagues at the Town Hall that they were not to ask me again, so I took the precaution to send it in writing, so as to avoid the fuss of asking me.

I had heard it mentioned that I had made the Town Hall too common. Everybody was always welcome there. It was like my home—an open door for all folks with their troubles and their claims. It had been suggested also that perhaps a rich man should be the next mayor, so as to help to raise more funds for the service men, etc. The strange thing was that in my war term of office I got up a fund of £12,464 9s. 3d., a Belgian Fund of £1,045 1s. 8d., a Serbian Fund of £714 2s. 8d., a Red Cross Fund of £660 15s., and my wife had raised a Sewing Guild Fund of £193 5s. 5d., whereas after we ceased office and there had been two years of other mayoralty, not more than £2,000 was raised, and there was not as much enthusiasm for the funds or the work as was put into it during the years August, 1914, to November, 1916.

I have been blessed with good daughters, and they allowed me to use my wage—£4 a week—for local purposes. There were three of them at work, and they kept the home fires burning to allow me to fulfil my duties. There was no mayoral salary then as there is now, but being the first Labour Mayor in the West Riding of Yorkshire, we jointly determined to do our best. The union also gave me facilities to carry on the work which we did with the help of an assistant and the voluntary help of my family and my nephew.





The late Charley Glyde, of Bradford, one of the best National Labour propagandists, in a special article about myself, wrote as follows :

" . . . while he was Mayor his doorstep and his boots were nearly worn out in journeys to the Town Hall. I know also that during the War he made innumerable journeys to London to attend the meetings of the many Conferences which were composed of Trade Unionists, Co-operators, and Socialists, to protect and safeguard the interests of service men and the dependents, without fee or reward.

" I had the pleasure of hearing Ben Turner speak during the War, but I never heard him preach ' A fight to a finish.' He never breathed hatred and malignancy against the working classes of the Central Powers, he always advocated an early settlement of the quarrel, a round table conference, conciliation, end the war, and peace. His great, big heart deplored and mourned for the terrible massacre of the workers of every country engaged in the strife, and especially felt for the aching hearts, wrecked homes and lives, and broken hopes of countless millions of the women and of every nation. Ben Turner is ' not guilty ' of the bleeding and murder of his class, ' not guilty ' of the prolonging of the war."

My colleagues in the Labour world decided to recognize my work, both as mayor and as Trade Union official. In one of the newspapers I find the following note :

" A Mayor has many and varied duties to perform, and his time is always taxed to the full. A good example of the variety was given by the Mayor of Batley (Councillor Ben Turner, J.P.) when addressing his Trade Union colleagues, who entertained him to dinner at Dewsbury Town Hall, on Saturday. He said he had a ' shift ' at the Town Hall that morning, and helped to pay ' out-of-works.' Then he went to the funeral of a Socialist uncle, kicked off at a football match, in addition to breaking a cinematograph, afterwards he took tea with the ' gallant youths ' of Mount Pleasant, and finished at the Trade Unionists' dinner.

" At the dinner referred to he made the following rhyming remarks :—

" ' There's some are born to riches,  
 An' others rise to fame,  
 Whilst many live and labour  
 Wi' just an honest name.  
 Ther's some maks gold their goddess,  
 An' brags o' stocks and shares,  
 Yet seldom they seem happy,  
 An' carry loads o' cares.

Give me the man 'at's willin'  
 To plod along an' try  
 To do what's reit, aye doin'  
 Just as he'd be done by ;  
 'At smiles to mak' folks happy,  
 An' yet can sympathise  
 Wi' folks i' worldly trouble  
 Through havin' been unwise.

There's some 'at's ne'er been tempted,  
 'At's nivver had a fall,  
 'At boasts abaht ther livin',  
 'At's nivver lived at all !  
 Wall, nivver heed, t' sun's shinin'  
 All ovvur t' world to-morn,  
 An' us 'at lives to see it should  
 Be prahd 'at we've been born.' "

The presentation included a magnificent oil painting of myself, which now is hung on the walls of Batley Town Hall, a cheque and a nice present for my wife.

As chief magistrate, I was lucky enough to have white gloves presented to me on two occasions. Court House cases were less numerous then (perhaps some of the regular clients were away). We had ■ few more children's cases, probably due to the lack of fatherly care, but on the whole the public are a law-abiding race of people, and during the past twenty years crime and drunkenness have

gone rapidly down, and one of the pleasing things to note is the closing of prisons, due to lack of "guests."

When the tribunals came along, for military service, I was made chairman of the Batley one, and on the first two sittings two well-known conscientious objectors appeared before us. They got exemption. It was a tight run for it, but I argued their case inside the court, and by one vote they were set free. One would have got off on medical grounds, but he would not claim it on that. He lost hundreds of pounds by his decision, but I always honoured him for it. We had before us cases of "alleged patriots" who believed in the war but couldn't be spared from business. Some got off; some did not.

Many men and mothers approached me for advice. Some of my strongest political opponents and critics were often on my door-step and laid their cases before me. I helped scores of them, and it is strange, but true, that some of the loudest alleged patriots were the most keen to get exemption from war service. One woman who is one of my keenest critics to-day, the most rabid anti-Labour woman I know, came night and morning many times to get her son off for business reasons. When I hear of her speaking wrongfully about me I smile. I can afford to do so, as I only did what seemed to me right then and I forgive her her antics. I cannot tell publicly what happened in our private retirements to consider cases, but I had many a keen controversy and a few times I had a "fratch," but each one of us had his own views of things.

Being on the Appeal Tribunal was not free from expense. We were treated to luncheons in turns by members and when one's own turn arrived



it sometimes came to £2 and £3 to foot the bill. It was the old-fashioned hospitality of folks working together that led to this being done. We could have called upon the fees to have been used for that purpose, but we didn't.

The thing that "got my goat" was the deceit and lying of some, and it was all one could do to keep one's temper when they found a man wanting the other fellow to go but not himself, and declaring how valuable he was either as a special constable or in some other way—super-patriots, believers in the war, etc., but for the other fellow to fight. Some came with clean statements, and one did one's best amidst it all.

Later, I was put on the Appeals Tribunal for the West part of the West Riding, holding our sittings at Wakefield, Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Barnsley. It was an unpleasant task, as practically all my colleagues had no respect for a man's conscientious objections. A number of decent men were exempt, but not all who ought to have been. I helped to maintain some of the "C.O's" who were sent to what was termed work of national importance. A schoolmaster was sent to be a woodman, miles away from home, at £1 per week, he to pay fares and lodgings out of it and keep a family of three children and a wife at his home. It was all a wicked business, and mercy, law and justice got lost in the wildness of the war fever.

Some of the best friends I had went down in the war. They were sacrificed for a wild will-o'-the-wisp termed justice, but which was not akin to justice, but should be christened madness of the rulers of Europe. It is over, but the aftermath of such a disaster lasts for another fifty years.

During my active life since the war I have come

up against it at times. I must have had to deal with not less than a thousand pension cases—probably more—and never a one has been turned away. I have tried my best, for during those tribunal days and during the Derby scheme period, and before, every public man pledged himself, and the public body to which he belonged, to see that the dependants or the victims of the war should not be lost sight of.

There are those who got off fighting by subterfuge and lying, by twisting and trickery, and who made money by it, who, to-day, are neglecting their duty to those men that were promised help and succour. I am not strong for the Haig Funds, etc., the poppy collections, etc. I don't want the begging for bread in the name of charity. The State is the body to stand by them, and I haven't changed my mind yet that it is better to help ten wrong ones in each hundred than to miss the ninety that are entitled to the fullest succour.

When the war was over I still had my jobs to do as a public man, and I had to travel extensively—often to London—in fulfilling what may be termed semi-public engagements. A man can get through a lot of work and fulfil many engagements if he has health, and "time-tables" himself out. That is what I have had to do during the last fifteen years in particular.

The year after the war was over happened to be the jubilee of the Batley Corporation, and they elected a number of Freemen of the Borough. The reproduced copy of the scroll informs readers that I was one of the chosen. I don't dislike the honour. It is a token of long service in one's own town. It is an appreciation of one's work in many walks of life, and it is a token I prize very deeply.

This is now ten years ago, and I still go on as alderman and Father of the Council and, as many of the papers put it in March this year, am the only bearded gentleman in the Town Council. There's nothing in the nature of personal opposition now as there used to be on the Council. I am reckoned one of the old ones, having served them in two centuries.

Our town, like others, had its quota of Belgian refugees, and well do I remember receiving in my official capacity as mayor the first batch that arrived. The entrance to the station was packed with our townfolks to give them a welcome. I spoke a few words of fatherliness and we then took them to their respective quarters. We had rented a few houses and shared them out in the best way possible, keeping the Flemish-speaking ones together and the French-speaking ones also together.

They were a very fine sample of artisans and peasantry. One or two seemed of a more classy type, and we had only one to send back out of the large number we had, as her ways were not exactly as moral as we desired. We had, of course, the usual bits of dissension here and there, but on the whole they behaved in a very sensible fashion.

I have had many communications from some of them, and my two grandchildren received postcards from two families at Christmas time.

With my daughters I visited some of these refugees in Antwerp in 1928, and they did try to repay us with kindness and hospitality.

The thing seems so like a nightmare now that men and women and children were driven from home by the war brutes of that time, and it made me still more a pacifist as I realized the futility as well as the wrongness of war.

I fought my first County Council fight twenty-two years ago, and lost. I remember an ex-mayor being outside one of the polling booths during election day, and blackguarding me to our men on duty. I happened to turn up, and asked him to repeat the dirty stuff in my presence, but he walked away. I regret calling him a "cad," for, after all, he knew no better, and I could afford to ignore him.

I tried again nineteen years ago and just won by a head. I had been to a trades union meeting a few miles away the night of the election, and when I got near the Town Hall, the declaration was being made. I had no idea what the result was, but I saw my daughter, just out of her 'teens, on the Town Hall steps, addressing the crowd, and it wasn't until she had done speaking and the defeated candidate was responding, that I gleaned I had won.

I am still a member of the West Riding County Council, for the last ten years being an alderman of the same, and for the past eight years Chairman of its Public Health and Housing Committee.

I am pleased to have been in at the creation of schemes of child welfare and baby clinics, tuberculosis dispensaries, nursing association maternity homes and sanatoriums for T.B. victims. When we built our T.B. sanatoriums for 300 patients near Ilkley, the old chairman, the medical officer and I saw several such places in the kingdom. Now we are about to build one for women and children and for over four years have been seeking a suitable site. I have seen at least forty different sites. We got a first-class one a few years ago, but a business man on our sites committee jibbed at the price and asked for a few days that he might try and

get it for £500 less. We were prevailed upon to do so, but in twenty-four hours it had been snapped up, and for four weary years, with a big waiting list, we looked everywhere for another. We found one nearly two years ago, in every respect suitable, both for water, drainage, aspect, shelter and soil. A great man owned it, but he wouldn't sell. He was tried by leading men to consent, but found one excuse after another. He then offered an alternative one which we looked at, and decided it wasn't suitable. I visited a great man in London to prove it to him, and thought I had convinced him, but the estate still held off on the site we wanted, and I remember the last excuse made was that they may want to build a family house on the site we had chosen, as the one they occupied was being affected by the atmosphere from Leeds. Strange to say, the site they had offered to us as an alternative one was two miles nearer Leeds, and I can't see any logic in their refusals to help. However by accident, another site has been found, and as there is no controversy with this old estate I hope before my term of office is up to see this sanatorium erected and opened.

As chairman of the committee I have made many visits of inspection to houses in rural parts. It's all well talking about the cabin with roses round the door, but some of the houses, even belonging to big landowners, are such inside that ill-health follows despite fresh air surroundings.

I went into one yard in South Yorkshire with five houses in it where four miners, a man and his three sons, had to wash as best they could. The water tap was in the yard. They had a sink, but no outlet. Upstairs the woman had done her best to keep the paper on the wall, but the water

ran from the roof down the wall, and dampness pervaded the whole place.

In another village, I went to see some houses where four families had to join at one earth closet, and in one row two houses at the end had to use an old derelict quarry for natural purposes.

At another beautiful-looking village, we went to impress upon the local authority the need of building houses so that the miners at the pit could live near their work. We were shown the deeds which indicated that the landowner would not allow houses to be built for miners at the pit within one and a half miles from the pit. I wrote the landowner myself about it, but in vain, and the subject even got mentioned in the House of Commons, but the law was with the landlord, and to-day the pit men are lacking houses near the pit.

My heart has been pierced many a time when I have seen decent housewives have to live in houses overcrowded and damp, with cellars built into the hillside, and staircases that were only rude wooden steps as if going into a hayloft. It's a marvel the homes are so neat and clean in some of these rural areas, but it is improving now, thanks to the vigorous work of my colleagues both on the County Council and in the various urban areas. It has all been quickened up by the increase of Labour men and women on our public bodies, coupled with an improvement in the public conscience. It is proving itself a paying proposition by the reduction of the death rate, by the reduction of the infantile death rate, and by the growth of hygienic education.

As a representative on both Batley Borough and as Chairman of the West Riding Public Health

Committee, I have been sent to many of the Annual Congresses of the two National bodies as well as to special congresses on Tuberculosis and Welfare work! Last year the Royal Sanitary Institute asked me to write and read a paper for the Annual Congress held at Plymouth. I wrote it, but was unfortunately prevented from reading it, as I couldn't spare the time owing to urgent Union work. It was read for me in my absence, and published in the Journal of the Society.

I take the following excerpts from it as showing what happened in the factory world last century and now.

"After 55 years' connection with the Textile Trade of Yorkshire, it stands to reason that I have seen many changes and improvements in the condition of our Textile factories both in Lancashire and Yorkshire and in other parts of Great Britain. I have seen a transformation, nay, a revolution in factory amenities that have helped to lengthen the life of the Industrial classes, and I hope to see more reforms, hygienic and social, before I pass by.

"Formerly, there were no places in which to eat our meals, except in the places where we worked, sometimes amidst steam, dirt and dust, or at times in or near the boiler-house. Now, no self-respecting factory is without its meal house or dining-room, especially if the factory is of any size or importance. It is far better from a hygienic point of view to eat a meal away from the work-room, with a table and plates to spread one's food upon, than to eat it at the end of a loom, or in a mulegate, or in a scribbling room, set upon a skep or upon a bale of shoddy. It is a more natural way to dine, and what is more natural is bound to be more healthy. There are, however, lots of factories where the old conditions prevail, and in the proposed new Factory Bill, attention to these matters will be made more complete.

"Formerly, clean drinking water was looked upon as a thing not to bother about. Now it has to be within reach of any of the employees, and there is no more natural drink in the world than clean cold water, for a thirsty soul.

"Formerly, we used to take our tea or coffee in the mills

in cans, and warm them by holding them in a warm dye-vat, or leave them on a boiler in the boiler-house, or string them over the hot water where a small wood basin was used for bobbins or other things. Now it is an axiom of good mill management to have a place where either fresh tea or coffee can be brewed, or can be bought, fresh made.

"There are not as many 'slop' or tea dinners as before, there are too many yet, but better ways and better notions will overcome this, added to the pressure of public opinion in the direction of compelling owners of factories to take care to provide the human necessities for the operative staff as well as for the office staff.

"There is considerable illness caused at times with our perpetual winters, by women and men, and young persons having to 'dry their wet clothes upon their backs.' During this recent winter and last year's summer wet stockings and clothes were the rule, and there being no drying room, or place to make a change of clothes, colds and loss of working energy resulted. I am sure that there are millions of working days lost in a decade through this cause alone, and it will pay firms to have clothes lockers for their work-people. These can be had at little cost per working person, and (kept under lock and key of each employee) would make for security and health, for the wet skirt and the wet coat could be hung up, and, in addition, the persons could come to their work in tidiness and return home in respectability. This is done in a few, but not in many factories. I remember over a quarter of a century ago, going into a silk dyehouse in Switzerland, where every person had his or her own locker, and they had numerous wash bowls as well, and as the factory ceased work at night, the operatives left tidily dressed, and were not taking the industrial dirt home with them.

"There is a great improvement in the lavatory accommodation. It used to be common for men to squat over a rail. It used to be a crude, rude arrangement, and now, under the Sanitary and Factory Acts, water closets are the rule, and, though many could be kept better than they are, and be more sufficient than they are, a revolution in this matter has been effected.

"In health safety there has been much done, and one of the recent improvements in woollen textile factories has been a Home Office order regulating the weights a man, woman, or young person shall lift. This has come along because of the many cases of hernia and heart-strain



arising in the past. The order was asked for jointly by the Joint Industrial Council in the Woollen and Worsted Trade. They first of all recognized the evil as shown by statistics provided by the Home Office, then they met the chiefs of the Factory Inspectors and together they visited mills and saw the weights of beams, warps and pieces both men and women had to lift. They visited engineering shops to find out mechanical means for dealing with heavy weights. They then agreed to a given weight per person, or per two persons, and the order was sanctioned by Parliament about two years ago.

"Anthrax has been considerably reduced in the Bradford wool trade by methods and systems being devised to prevent this sudden disease. Dangerous wools are known about, and in time one hopes to see it overcome. In East India Wools it occurs too frequently, but the Carpet, Rug and Blanket Trade employer and employees through their Industrial Council are trying to deal with it on scientific and human lines, and the incidence is far less than it used to be.

"There is another factor in textile mills being tackled in earnest, and the Industrial Fatigue Research Board have investigated and experimented with the lighting in factories, especially in the loom-gate, where eye-strain and head-ache were formerly very severe.

"In the press-shop when heavy pieces and layers of heavy press paper have to be dealt with, the Trades Union and the Employers' Associations have fixed upon the uniform length of pieces, that shall be the maximum dealt with, and as some pieces are very heavy, the two bodies in many parts of Yorkshire have so fixed the length that two men shall not be subject to the heart and body strain that formerly made young men old before their time.

"There is considerable 'Spinners' Cancer' occurring in the cotton trade. Hardly a week goes by without some spinner falling a victim to this disease. I am pleased to know that it is having the attention both of the Home Office and the organizations of the employers and employed in the cotton trade. Cancer is still a growing menace to all sections of society, but in industries like textile, printing, etc., there may be something found out that may prevent it occurring in these trades.

"In our dye-houses, eczema, chrome and arsenical poisoning is too frequent to be satisfactory, and again our joint bodies should join up with the Medical fraternity, and find out the cause and apply the remedies.

' Shuttle-kissing has been a topic of discussion and investigation in the cotton-weaving trade, and it can, and should, be stopped. It does not apply in the same degree in the woollen and worsted trade, although the same method of shuttle-kissing, or 'slooping,' or drawing the thread through the eyelet is the same. The shuttles are usually kept by the same weaver in the woollen trade. There is, however, no mixing of shuttles, and perhaps this has something to do with it, whilst the material itself may have a different effect also.

"There are certain human factors in the various industries that are having attention. Our factory surgeons are, I think, an improved type. They act less perfunctorily than formerly.

"I believe it would be wise, however, if for our younger folks going into industry, that the Medical Officer and his staff who deal with babies, children and school goers, should have continued connection with them as they enter into the mills and factories. Perhaps this is asking too much, but they know by their card index, the position and condition of the scholars, and they might be useful from 14 to 18.

"There is a great improvement, in general, both as regards window lights, air passages and air ventilators, and other industrial methods that have made it healthier than it used to be, but I have a great belief that the next 25 years will see a bigger care bestowed on the health of the industrial worker than during the last 25 years.

"The welfare work that is developing, and the Shop Committee work that should be encouraged, is bound to be beneficial.

"The workers have to live for about 60 hours per week in and about the factory out of the 168 hours in a seven-day week, this is more than one-third of the operatives living time, and it should be as essential to see them housed healthily at their work, as it is in a well-governed town to see them housed healthily during their sleeping and leisure time."

The address itself shows the many improvements there have been, and whilst I have not done it, I have helped a little bit through Trades Union work and public life. There is much more to do and I hope to do a lot more still.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MY VISIT TO THE BATTLEFIELDS

DURING January, 1916, I was invited to visit the Battlefields of Belgium, and, along with General Swaine, Sir Eric Ohlsen, of Hull, the Mayor of Leicester, and a Deputy Lieutenant of Northumberland—who went in his uniform—Sir Grattan Doyle and a lawyer from Leeds, spent several days on a tour in the war regions.

It was an eye-opener. I remember being asked at Folkestone, on our outward journey, if I had any gold in my possession. That was just before the time when we were told not to hoard gold up. I had about £11, in sovereigns and half-sovereigns, but I duly tipped them up and got notes for them, and have never had a gold coin since. Paper is as good, except that paper may get burnt, whereas gold is in that sense indestructible. It is true that both have wings, however, and fly away, and there is still a shortage in my pocket to-day as in days of yore.

When we got on board the first things one saw were lifebelts for everybody, and a drill took place so that they could see we were prepared for eventualities. The submarine menace was at work. I don't think any of us felt any fear, however, for we were escorted by two dark destroyers, which perhaps put the notion of security in our minds.

Arriving at Boulogne, I went to the Post Office to wire home, and started off with my bit of French to a postal man at the office. His reply was very encouraging. He said, "Talk English, Ben," and I did.

I had a stroll round the town at night, and as I had taken with me 200 packets of cigarettes in an attaché case, I got chats and talks with many soldiers, and distributed many cigarettes on that evening.

After a night's rest, we were taken out in cars to the battlefields. They took us to Cassell, to Poperinghe, and to the town of Ypres. The latter place was partly a wreck, and the sight of the wounded being taken to the provisional dressing stations gave us another glimpse of the horrors of war.

Later on, at Ypres, we went into the dug-out of a Brigadier-General, and after some tea (some had whisky) we were taken round to the dug-out for telephones, to see the trench diggers, etc., and about one o'clock we desired to go to St. Jean to see some of the troops there. The Brigadier put us in charge of an under officer who, acting on advice, led us across a field, as we were told that at one each day the Germans shelled the main road. We were ignorant and innocent, and did as we were told, but had hardly got across one field and into another when the officer said, as he heard a screeching noise in the air, "Lie down!" We all lay down on our bellies. It was a whizz-bang coming, and the Germans were shelling that field. During our passage across the second field they dropped four shells. I just "chanced an eye" when laid on my belly, to see what the thing was like, and it seemed to me, as the shell burst, like a thousand

little bits of metal being scattered about for a few yards from where it burst. Under advice we went from the field as speedily as possible, but in trying to cross a trench full of water under a hedge, I dropped in up to the thighs, but my waders kept me dry. We returned to the Brigadier's dug-out, had a drop more tea, and two of them some whisky, and gave up special field work for the day.

The day following we were taken to another battlefield—Laventie—and to another spot, the name of which I forget. Here I saw the military machine work. At the headquarters they had a big room whose walls were lined with maps, and they recorded with coloured flags the shots that fell and where they fell, and kept constant contact by 'phone with the men using the 'phones in the trenches. It was a scientific work, undoubtedly, but it was Hell. It was here we saw men coming out of the trenches to their four days' rest. One platoon, or whatever they are called, were tired, grimy, dirty and worn. Later on I saw the same men having hot baths in some old dye-vats taken over from an old dye-house for that purpose. Didn't they enjoy that refreshing hot water and that cleanse up! I had chats with many of them, but they wanted to know most when the thing was going to end, and to know more about home than to talk about the war.

We went on to the trenches at Laventie—not the front line ones—but near enough to danger to see, and far away out enough to feel a bit safe. Going past a blacksmith's shop on our way I looked in at the shoeing smith, and when he saw me he shouted with delight, "Hello, Ben, is that thee?" It was. He was from a near-by Yorkshire

town, and I guess recognized me from his visits to labour meetings before the war.

Up in the air were two aircraft having a bit of a duel. I don't know which was which, but they scampered off into the distance and I saw them no more.

Everybody has read enough about the war, but I just desired to mention these incidents, because they made me sick to think that this was the twentieth century and two thousand years after the Prince of Peace came down to give us His peace message.

When the war was over I visited these battlefields again, namely, in January, 1919. Lens was a quagmire; Ypres was destroyed, and in a 200 miles' run in various directions one saw desolation and destruction.

Since then I have visited parts of the old battlefields, and new towns have sprung up. Ypres is a town of pleasure and memorials, and the two big things to see are the Menin Gate Memorial and the ruins of the old Cloth Hall.

Waste! waste! waste! And there are folks who are glibly preparing for a next war, both with poison gas and with air bombs, etc. The whole of the lunatics are not in our asylums!

## CHAPTER XVII

### MY VISIT TO AMERICA

My visit to America was a red-letter time for both my wife and myself. We had saved £75, which we drew out for the journey, and with the £60 allowed us by Congress we sailed second-class along with Mr. and Mrs. Brace to the Land of the Stars and Stripes. Mrs. Turner was to act as nurse to me if I fell sick, but, alas, it was the other way round. Brace and I didn't turn a hair, but the two women had to lay up a couple of days with *mal de mer*.

When we approached New York all was bustle and go, and the American Federation of Labour sent their representative, Mr. Frayne, to meet us. When we landed we had Customs officers to pass. Naturally I attended to our two trunks, but the kindly agency of Mr. Frayne made it very easy. But I was a bit startled, on looking round, on the quay-side for my wife, to notice a Customs officer examining her coat. It happened to be a woven fabric, looking very much like a real skin coat. It was an imitation one, woven in our own district. The Customs man was somewhat doubtful about it, but when I had explained that the cloth had been woven at Ravensthorpe, near Dewsbury, and had cost £7 in all, and on showing him that it wasn't a skin coat at all, he allowed it to pass. I made enquiries as to why there was all this fuss,

and the answer was given me that Americans coming home from Europe had brought skin coats over and that they were dutiable. However, we got through, and Mr. Frayne took us to the Victoria Hotel, where we had our first glance at hotel life with its bedroom, bathroom and lavatory in one combined suite.

It was here that we had our first unlucky bump, for I received a wire from my relations in Philadelphia that my brother's widow had passed away and asking us to attend the funeral the day but one after our arrival in New York. It was a great blow to us, for she had been preparing to make us welcome. It was also inconvenient, for Brace and I had promised to speak at various Trades Union meetings in New York. We managed two of them the following evening, at least I did.

The chief one was of Hebrew workers in the clothing trade. How enthusiastic they were; what a cordial welcome they gave us. As we entered the hall a band of five performers struck up the Marseillaise. When we were seated on the platform they gave us another verse of it. When the chairman got up to speak, the band repeated it. When I got up to speak—the same. It was ditto when Brace rose to speak, and when they introduced our wives to the audience, we had another repetition. There happened to be another hall in the same big building, in which a socialist, Meyer London, was standing as a candidate for their Parliament, and they came to ask me to speak in his support, and as I entered the second hall another band struck up the Marseillaise. I had a surfeit of that French revolutionary hymn that night.

There was one pleasing incident in our New York



visit. Years before, a young man named Dyche—a Jewish garment worker in Leeds—and I had become very friendly in the Socialist movement and work. I had lost sight of him for several years, but knew he had gone to America. We were visiting the Bible-House—the headquarters of the Garment Workers' Union—when who should I see but Dyche, who, immediately recognizing me, came with outstretched hand to meet me, and in Jewish fashion kissed me on both cheeks. It was a pleasant surprise, and more so when I learnt he was a chief official of the Garment Workers' Union, and would be a co-delegate with us to the two weeks Congress of the American Federation of Labour at St. Louis.

My wife and I made our way to Philadelphia to attend my relative's funeral, and whilst it was a sad event, it was made more comfortable, in so far as we were able to see many relations and many friends who had emigrated from Yorkshire to the textile centres of Kensington and Skullykill.

We had a second experience at Philadelphia of a more pleasant character. My nephew had been presented by his wife with another baby, and as they were calling it "Ben" after its great-uncle, my wife and I had to stand godmother and godfather to it. My wife had never been to a christening in her life. I had only been to my own, and we had to be told by my nephew, who was a high churchman, how to proceed. We managed all right, or at least the little lad did, for he was asleep all the time and behaved far better than his great-uncle did when he was christened.

From Philadelphia we made our way to Washington. When I am away from Britain and see anything that mentions England, I am in full

swing for it, and on one of the little stations outside Philadelphia my wife pointed out some Yorkshire-made toffee in tins, and despite my not being a sweet tooth, I got one as a reminder of Halifax and Yorkshire and home.

When we arrived at Washington, officers of the American Federation of Labour met us, and Mr. and Mrs. Brace had also turned up, and we were put up at a leading hotel. Brace and I left our wives to rest whilst we went out with the late Sam Gompers, President of the Federation. Sam was a little man in stature, but one of America's big men in things that matter. He was a Cockney Jew, having worked in London in a cigar factory in his youthful days, along with the famous Bernhard Baron, head of the famous Black Cat and Carreras firm, now a millionaire and philanthropist. A short time ago I was privileged to have coffee with Mr. Baron at the Savoy Hotel, and we exchanged knowledge we each had of the late Sam Gompers.

One of the noted spots Sam took Brace and me to was the noted oyster bar where cocktails and oysters were taken in profusion. I am a small hand at oysters, and six will suffice me in my best times, but Sam took plateful after plateful, and regaled himself to the full. It's an art, and Sam possessed that qualification.

We were introduced by him to prominent citizens of Washington, and acquired some of the atmosphere of the place during our two days' stay there. We saw the Capitol, or White House, but we were unable to see the President, as he had gone to his Cleveland home to vote. It was one of our regrets, but it couldn't be helped.

We travelled by train from Washington to St. Louis, and were riding for twenty-five hours. Sam

and two colleagues had a little cabin of their own, and it was said they played poker or talked Federation business all the time. We went to bed. Whatever there is great in America, I do not think their sleepers are great. In fact, to me they are horrid. Down each side of the corridor were berths, and the only privacy was a curtain drawn in front of the berth. I had a top berth and my wife a lower one. About sixteen folks were in that carriage, and how they undressed and dressed passes my comprehension. I guess they did it. I tried, but it was only half a job. I remember raising the curtain during the night, and the picture I saw was of a darkey, with white rolling eyes, on sentry duty at the end of the coach. In the morning, we men scrambled to the wash place, and performed our ablutions as best we could, but I was real glad when the journey was over and we could change and wash and dress in comfort and with satisfaction.

They put us up at a big hotel—The Planters—and my wife and I had a bedroom, bathroom and lavatory to ourselves on the eighth floor. Brace and his wife were on the fifth floor. I was told afterwards that the price was higher as we went down, but I don't know. There seemed an army of bellboys and darkies to run about the place, and the big lounge of the Hotel was more in the nature of a covered exchange, where men met and did business or gossiped as the fancy moved them. There were stores in the hallway, where you could get patent medicines, clothes, cigars, newspapers, etc. I must confess I like our hotels better, but then some folks would say I am hard to please. We stayed at this hotel for nearly two weeks.

We had a little accident one of the days, which

has caused my wife some trouble ever since. As we were going into our meal one afternoon she slipped on the tessellated floor with her leg doubled under her. The hotel people got her up and placed her on a chair on wheels, and we got her into the lift and into our bedroom, when I at once examined the wound at the top of her ankle, and in my distress went to the telephone to ask for a doctor. Before I reached the 'phone, a knock came to the door, and on opening it a man asked if he could see Mr. Turner. I said "Oh dear no, I am busy. My wife has fallen and I am just 'phoning for a doctor." "Oh," said the man, "I am a doctor." "Are you?" I said. "Yes," he again replied. "Come on in, lad," I said, "and look at my wife's ankle." He came in, examined it carefully, and said "Wait ■ few moments and I will go down to the chemist's shop." Away he went, and in ■ bit he returned with a bottle and some lint. He put peroxide on the wound for a time until the oozing had subsided, and then he bound it up in proper style. I was delighted to have this, and so promptly and accidentally, that when he had finished I asked him how much I should pay him. He promptly replied "Nothing." I was staggered to find such generosity in the land of the almighty dollar. Ultimately he informed me that he was a qualified doctor, but was known as the "Hobo" or tramp leader, and that being wealthy he doctored folks in distress free. He then told me that he had come to ask me if I would speak with him at a meeting of the unemployed on the forthcoming Sunday afternoon. I promptly replied "Yes." He wondered if Mr. Brace would come also, and I promised I would try to get him to do so. He thanked me for my promise and for several days

he came and dressed my wife's wound until the wound was healed up. I mentioned the meeting to Mr. Brace, and he and I and our wives went on the Sunday afternoon and spoke to a few score of the derelicts of America. I don't know if we did them any good or not, but both he and they were profuse in their thanks. I happened to mention it to Mr. Gompers at the hotel at night, and he seemed very wrath with me. They didn't have any truck with the unemployed. I didn't care ; I feel for the unemployed and the downcast wherever or whoever they are, and did not regret having gone to give a few words of cheer. The doctor was not in the good graces of Mr. Gompers and when Mr. Gompers didn't like anybody, he could show it very strongly. The doctor, I learned, was the son of the engineer who built the big bridge over the Missouri at St. Louis, and his mother lived in a very large house on the outskirts of the city, whilst the doctor lived very plainly over a baker's shop in one of the streets where the working classes resided. He was a most genuine man. As is well-known in the Trades Union circles in America the Trades Union label is a big factor, and one afternoon my wife and I went to have tea with him in his apartments. He brought the food in and the loaf and the tinned fruit were each decorated with the Union label. He was more thorough than some of the Trades Unionists themselves.

To attend a two weeks' congress of the American Federation of Labour is a ripe experience. They do things differently than we do. Gompers was the President, and on the stroke of nine opened the session and delivered his speech walking about the platform in free and easy fashion. Later he called upon the first vice-president to present his report,

and for three and a half hours he read his document. In this country it would be printed and presented to each delegate, and considered page by page. There time is less important, and they did it otherwise. I think our method more business-like.

During the week Brace and I had to deliver our fraternal speeches, and afterwards each of us and our wives were presented, the men with a gold watch and our wives with beautiful satchels. I don't think I like their plan. It seems they call upon delegates to donate one dollar each to buy these presents with. We at our congress make the presents from the funds of congress, and it is much nicer to the recipients than it was to see them collect the dollars with which to buy the presents. It's all a matter of taste.

I had an experience of the fantastic fooling that some of the delegates used to make a point of employing. It was when I was stood having a smoke outside the congress hall one afternoon, when a man came up to me post haste and said "I want to see Mr. Turner." "Well," I replied, "I am Ben Turner." "Oh dear," said he, "do come with me. There is a man down the road slandering you awfully." "Oh, let him go on," I replied, nonchalantly. "But," he urged, "it's really wicked what he is saying." "Who is it?" I asked. "A man named Mr. Woodman." I cudgelled my mind for a bit and then remembered that a Mr. Woodman had recently emigrated to America from the Bradford District. So I bit and fell. "What is he saying?" "Why," he answered, "he says it is not your wife you have brought with you." Naturally, my dander was up, and I went with him about a quarter of a mile and into a

saloon where a number of men were seated having drinks. The man said "Where is Mr. Woodman?" "Oh," answered one of them, "he has just gone out." We both went out and he took me to a shop where a wood image stood outside the shop door. I saw I had been had and said "Damn you," and was walking away. "Nay, man," he chuckled, "you'll pay for some beer for us." I turned back with him, threw down three dollars, when one of them said "Don't tell Mr. Brace." "Oh," thought I, "you want to try it on him, do you?" So I went back to the congress, angry and yet amused at their childishness and my simplicity, but told Brace all about it, so that they didn't try it on him. They tried similar dodges on two other fraternal delegates, and one was so angry that he pulled out a dagger and threatened them with violence, but was pacified by the intervention of Gompers, who had on previous occasions had to protect fraternal delegates from this form of mad frolic. I learnt that at one congress ■ few years before, two fine, clean-living Welshmen had been actually arrested on the platform of congress by bogus policemen and others had had silly tricks played on them by odd foolish delegates to the convention. I understand there is none of this rough house work now. A new type of delegate and a more sober class of representative attend these gatherings.

The American Federation of Labour is a great organisation like our own Trades Union Congress, but with a different method and different form of organisation. They have unions of industry. One Union for engineers, for miners for railway men, for textile workers and so on. Despite it all they have their demarcation troubles as acute if not

more so than in this country, and such troubles are reported upon at their annual convention. The Industrial Workers of the World is akin to our Communist and Minority Movement here and has as much influence on industrial progress as a flea has on an elephant. They sometimes irritate, but never get anywhere by their methods. The old Knights of Labour is completely dead. There are breakaway unions in some industries, and some that won't accept the A.F. of L. constitution, but generally these don't count. If a union is reported for some breach to the convention, the matter is before a commission and they bring forward a report and resolution. I think sometimes resolutions at our congresses are little "lecturettes," but they are twice or thrice as wordy in their form and matter, beginning each paragraph with "Whereas ———" I think ours is simpler and better, but then I may be looked upon as a prejudiced person.

The functions of the convention are self-made. There are no civic receptions such as grace our congresses, and the chief one is the annual dinner of delegates, which is a great affair. I don't know how many courses we had. I missed more than I hit, for I do not care for big meals. There was no prohibition in those days, so drinks and cigars were nearly *ad lib* at my table, and as I didn't take any the bottles served to me came in for the toast-master and waiters, who had a special feast of their own.

I went to a dinner one night at 11 o'clock. It was given by the Actors' Association, who were and are part of the Federation. It had to be after theatre hours for business reasons, and ■ most sober, jolly and artistic function it was. I heard noted artists sing and recite, and when I left with



Mr. John Mitchell at three in the morning, they were as happy as could be. We left Mr. Gompers, and I met him coming into the hotel at 8 a.m., having done the night through, and after a bath, a shave and a change, he was prompt on duty at 9 a.m., opening the day's congress proceedings. He was a physical marvel.

Another function was one got up by Welsh residents in Granite City, mostly ex-quarrymen from North Wales. Really it was in honour of Mr. and Mrs. Brace, as Welsh folks, but here we had good food and not too much of it, but I got my first taste of the sweet potato. We had potatoes boiled, roasted, stuffed and in various other ways. The company, being from the old country, was a very pleasant change from shop talk on Labour and Trades Union matters.

One of the days we were in St. Louis we were invited to an outside convention termed the Waterways Convention, and in a very huge temporary structure were accommodated on the platform. Right in front and to the right and left of us were delegates from the various States through which the Mississippi and Missouri ran, and they were sectionalised in their separate parts. There were numerous bands, banners and badges, and I have a dozen different badges at home to-day which were presented to us on that occasion. They did this job flamboyantly and everything was on a big scale.

One meets with Yorkshiremen in all parts of the world. They go first and Scotchmen follow. One afternoon, after a surfeit of speeches, I got on a street car and rode out several miles. Having alighted, I made across the village street to a shop I had noticed as I went across. I heard somebody

shout out, "Hey, Ben, what ar' ta doin' here?" meaning "What are you doing here?" I twisted round and found the man to be from a neighbouring town and whom I had helped across a few years before.

Another day I thought I would cross the Great Bridge over the Missouri—a great fine structure. I had to pay five cents to go across. When I had got nearly to the end, and seen up and down the mighty river, I casually and jocularly remarked to an attendant in uniform, "Here, lad, have they to pay to come back?" "Hello," he said, "yo're a Lancashire man." "Nay, mon," I replied, "I come from Yorkshire." He was a Lancashire man employed as a bridge attendant and I had a half-hour's chatty talk with him and found that despite his many years in America he loved old Lancashire and old England still.

One of the sights we saw in St. Louis was the great Armour Kelling factory. I have been in slaughterhouses and abattoirs in England and in Germany, but this was a great concern, where cattle, pigs and sheep were killed by the score each hour of the working day. It was a weird sight. In the pig pen a pig would have a chain hung round its leg, it would be drawn up on a great wood drum, and as it revolved round to a blood-bespattered man, he struck it with his sharp knife, it automatically travelled onwards and was washed, scraped and disembowelled before it had chance to finish its scream. From the time it left the pen to the time it was quartered and passing away to the curing room only  $17\frac{1}{2}$  minutes elapsed. By the several tables were two inspectors, one for the State and one for the firm, examining the dead flesh for defects like T.B. The fate of the calves

hurt me the worst, for they were not killed so simply as the pigs. They had their skins cut off their faces before they had done bleating. It was a strange sight, and I was a vegetarian for the next two days.

Before we got to St. Louis I made sure and booked my wife's and my own passage back to England. I felt that, after the convention was over, I should want to get away home. My friend Brace didn't think he would get back so soon, but after a week's sojourn in St. Louis he felt the same urge as I had had and booked home on the same boat as we, and a good job it was he did so, for he was only just back in time to take part in his Parliamentary Election in December, 1910.

From St. Louis we went by another excruciating night sleeping train to Detroit, on across to Windsor and down to Baltimore, where we stayed for a couple of days to allow us to visit the Niagara Falls. What a sight they are! They are truly one of the seven wonders of the world. We went across the bridge and saw the barrel in which some foolish person had gone down the rapids. There were other relics of hardiness and folly. I think the Canadian side is the finer side, but that is a matter of personal judgment and not to be taken as dogmatic. I have seen it once and I am like W. H. Hudson, in one of his books, where he declares there are spots he does not want to see again, for first impressions were often the best impressions. So it is with me.

We went from Baltimore in the Black Diamond Express to New York, and spent another two days there sightseeing. The Co-operative Wholesale Society had a wheat buyer in the city and he took us to the Wheat Pit or Wheat Exchange.

Looking down from the balcony we saw slightly raised circular stands on the floor, on which men stood, and high up on the wall opposite them was a clock (not to tell the time) but to indicate the points at which wheat was being bought and sold in Chicago. The price of flour is not dictated by the grower but by gamblers in our foodstuffs and who are always on the ramp.

We also visited Wall Street, where the big finance gambling occurs, and here was the famous tick-tacking going on far more scientifically than on Doncaster or other race-courses. High up in buildings in the third, fourth and fifth storeys men would be seen using their fingers and receiving similar finger messages from other men in the street. It was a lamentable sight, as it meant to me gambling with the life's chances of men and women engaged in industry. We also visited the Jewish quarter of New York and in their great tenements the Jewish housewife had her bedding and bedclothes hung out of the window to sweeten with the contact with the air.

The morning came for sailing, and right glad were we for our visit to America, and more so to be pointing our way homeward. There was one thing on the sea that nearly overpowered me both going and coming back, namely, the sea solitude. True, there were attractions and distractions on board—concerts and games—but I always feel it as I look over a boatside away from the sight of land what a silence or solitude there is. The voyages were painless and I think the thing I enjoyed most was going all over the vessel with the captain and engineer, learning what a great township a great liner is. The best amusement I got, however, was the stokers' band.

Still, there is no place like home, and when we arrived at the quayside at Liverpool I was not more than 25 minutes before I was away home on the old British railway—the best railway in the world. I think my sentiments were expressed in the following few lines which I wrote on getting home :—

Oh, for a rest by my own fireside,  
And a share of home's delight,  
A chat with those who can talk my talk  
On my garden seat at night ;  
There is nought more sweet than the ecstasy  
Of returning to the fold ;  
After weeks of travel and changing scene  
'Tis like changing dross for gold.

Oh, for a kiss from that wife o' mine !  
And the family round my chair,  
To tell the tales, and to hear the news,  
And their joys and sorrows share !  
The world is wide. There are ocean gems  
That you find wher'er you roam,  
But the greatest gem of all to me  
Is my dear old Yorkshire Home.

*Yorkshire Evening Post.*

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MY VISIT TO RUSSIA

I THINK my greatest adventure was the visit to Russia in 1920. It was the first official delegation of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress. The Labour Party made me one of their delegates, and Messrs. Tom Shaw and Robert Williams and Mrs. Snowden were my colleagues from the Labour Party; whilst Alf. Purcell, Harry Skinner and Miss Bondfield were from the Trades Union Congress. Clifford Allen and Dick Wallhead went for the I.L.P., and whilst they were not in the official delegation, they were in close collaboration with us all through. Mr. Charles Buxton acted as our interpreter and courier, and Dr. Haden Guest went as medical attendant and secretary. Mr. Meakin of the *Daily News* and Mr. George Young were also with us most of the time. They made me chairman of the delegation.

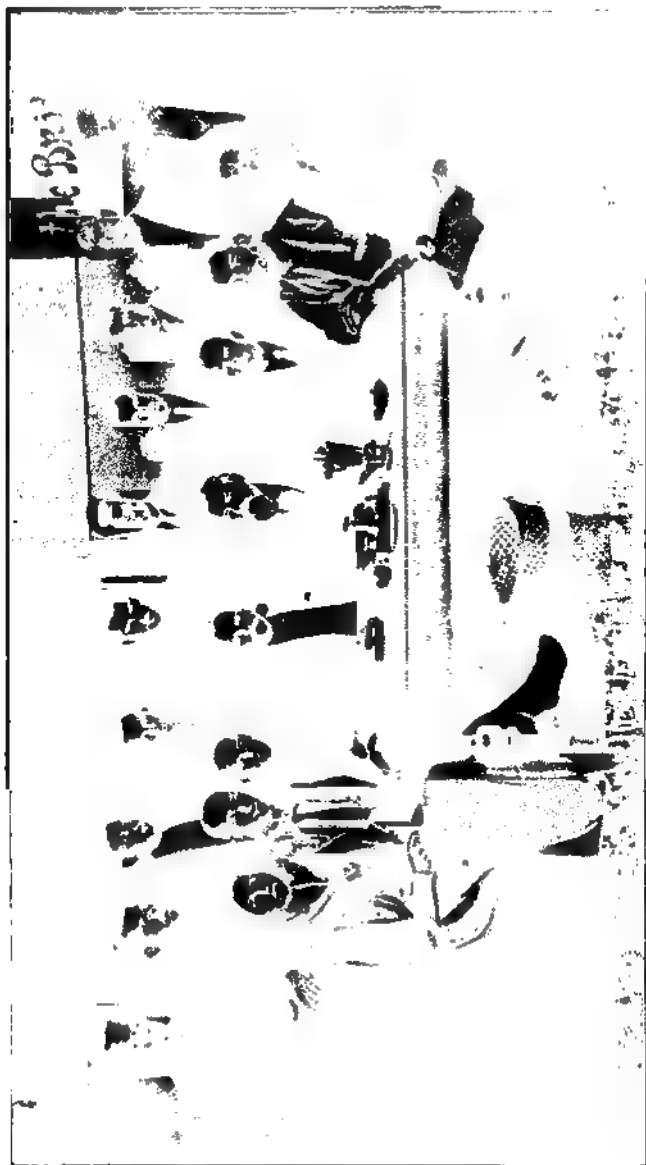
Our journey from Newcastle to Bergen was a violent one, for practically the whole party were seasick, but ere we really left Newcastle Mrs. Snowden was nearly pitched overboard by a lurch of the vessel, and the barrier not having been put in its place she would have gone into the water but for one of our colleagues seizing hold of her when the lurching took place.

We went via Bergen and Christiania, and arrived

in the latter place in time for the trades union movement to use four of us as speakers on their May Day demonstration. The huge square was one mass of humanity. They had come in procession a mile long, and the four platforms were placed at the four corners of the square. I can only speak one language, and so what I said had to be interpreted. Christiania was supposed to be "dry," but I saw a few folks—not many—who had become top-heavy, and I was told they were hillmen, who, no doubt, had their own whisky stills.

I was introduced here to a new form of eating. One of my colleagues—a constant traveller abroad—asked me to lunch with him at one of the hotels. We got a table for two, and then he piloted me to a long counter upon which were a large number of dishes. One helped oneself there, and this *Smosenberg* was in itself enough for any man's lunch and, candidly, I thought in my ignorance that it was the lunch. It was not. It was only the *hors d'œuvres* or, as it would be called in Yorkshire, "a bitin' on" or a "tasty bit." The luncheon followed. This feature of eating was predominant both in Norway and in Sweden. I saw more of it in the latter country, for it was there at every meal, and it gave me the impression that the Scandinavians know how to look after the inner man. They would kill me in a month at their rate of eating and refreshing.

From Christiania we went on to Stockholm, the renowned capital of Sweden. The first duty of Dr. Guest and myself as Secretary and Chairman respectively was to call upon the British Legation in Stockholm. They were exceedingly kind to us, and wondered how we should fare in Russia.



THE TEXTILE TRADES UNION EXECUTIVE MEETING IN MOSCOW

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We next went and saw the King's brother, and had our chat with him. After this, he and I went to see the Prime Minister, Dr. Branting, the Socialist Premier of a Socialist Government. I had met him on several occasions during preceding years, and the kindly man was the soul of courtesy and comradeship. He asked about Great Britain and the Labour Movement, questioned us as to our visit to Russia, and gave us for all our party an invitation to a ministerial dinner at the Opera House. He kindly sent me a note during one of the days we were held up in Stockholm, asking me to tea at home with Mrs. Branting and the family, but I was fixed up and couldn't go. The Houses of Parliament were open for our visitation, and Socialist members of both the Lower and Upper Houses looked after us with that fraternalism that I have always found in my journeys abroad. We had to stay in Stockholm six days, owing to the absence of a boat to Reval. It couldn't be helped, and the Russian representatives, as well as the Swedish Labour Movement, gave us all the pleasure and comfort that could be desired.

Ultimately we arrived at Reval, and as the boat drew near to the quayside, the delegation of the Socialist Party of Reval, who had been sent to meet us, burst out into song and chorus, and despite our lack of language, made us free and welcome, and piloted us to the residence of one of the princes of Reval—a fine mansion that had been made into a kind of club for the Parliamentary Socialist Ministry of Esthonia. We stayed in Reval two days, and Dr. Guest and myself called upon the British Mission and were made cordially welcome. They gave us news and showed us reports as to the condition of affairs in Russia,

and we learnt from them and others that the most flagrant lying messages were being sent from Helsingfors to Riga, and to-day I am always in doubt when I see messages about Russia coming from these two places, for our actual experiences then and later were that they doctored the news to suit the times or the governments or the financiers, and told the truth in a roundabout and ornamental way.

The Russian Embassy also sent their invitation to have food and conference with them. It was also arranged that our whole party should go to a Chaliapine concert, and we were greatly entertained by this great singer giving us sixteen songs in his own way, with his marvellous voice and his inimitable acting. During an interval, a number of us went round into the artist's room, and had our cigarette and coffee and a chat (through interpreters) with Chaliapine, and heard him declare his great love for his beloved Russia and his faith in the Revolution.

From Reval we took train for the frontier. There were four of us in one compartment, two up and two down, and my fourteen stone was the light-weight of the party. It was a stuffy ride but it got us there. From the edge of Esthonia we crossed the frontier, had Customs examinations, passports checked, etc., and for several hours were kicking our heels about. One of the sights we saw was ■ party of German prisoners being piloted home. Another was a body of peasantry, or working folks, with all their goods and chattels on the ground, making their way out of Russia into countries they belonged to.

Ultimately we crossed the frontier into No Man's Land, and then into Russia and into a special train

awaiting us. There were barbed wire entanglements still left, bridges had not been rebuilt, and all the evidences of the *Koltchak* attack were before our eyes. When we had got nicely settled in the train and gone a few miles, the chief of the Soviet of Narva, along with a deputation, came to give us a welcome to their country. How joyous they were to see an official deputation from Great Britain—the first of any sort since 1917! They cheered us, they sang for us, and they blessed us. As chairman, I had to make my first speech on Russian soil. I did my best, and the interpretations began, and after a while our train moved on.

We arrived at Petrograd (now Leningrad) at midnight, four hours late. What a commotion there was! Twenty thousand folks were assembled at the station with bands and banners to meet and greet us. What a brave sight it was to see these famine-logged artisans in their joy at being visited by their trade union folks from Britain.

The first person to greet and to kiss me was Madame Balabanoff, whom I had met at two of our international textile workers' congresses years before—a short-built, size-of-sixpennyworth-of-copper lady, who had transferred her services to the Soviet, and because of her linguistic abilities was used to mother we Britishers during our stay in Petrograd. After speeches of welcome and a lame reply from myself, they took us away to the princely residence of a former potentate, where we had tea and black bread, a wash and a talk and a smoke, and away to bed at about four in the morning. For several days we did our visits to factories, workshops, rest-houses, crèches and sanatoriums.

The first morning, however, Mr. C. R. Buxton

and myself went on our own in one of the few droskys to be chartered to visit several folks for whom we had letters from their relatives in England. It has been said that we were piloted round, watched and spied upon by the Soviet emissaries. This is not true, for nobody but our antique driver was with us, and he did not go into the houses with us. We visited an old lady who lamented the fact of the Soviet having destroyed the glamour and glory of the old Petrograd, with its Society and its Court, yet even she gave the Soviet a good word for their attention to the well-being of the children. We visited an old professor—one of the intelligentsia of Russia—also alone, and later on ■ worker in an ordinary workman's home. We delivered our letters, and received messages to bring back with us.

I went with some of our party to see ■ great woollen factory, and had fine talks with a designer who was proud of his cloth designs but lamented the fact that some of his skilled English heads of departments had gone home and that the newer folks did not understand spinning yarn and manufacturing cloth like the departed ones did. We visited clothing factories and boot factories, and in all cases were introduced to the mill soviet or shop committee. With their new power they were as pleased as children, but proud of the revolution. At the great Putiloff engineering shop we had a great reception from the assembled workmen. I had heard the story that the revolution had destroyed religion and the Church, but I counted fourteen ikons in the Putiloff works themselves, and saw workmen making their obeisance to them. In workers' flats we visited connected with some of the mills, there was the ikon on the

wall, proving that the workers had still the old religious spirit within them.

Two of the guides or leaders of our party spoke good English. One I knew when in England, and one had worked in America many years, and thus our own language troubles were made less difficult. We went the first noon-time to have a meal in a huge building formerly a grand duke's riding school and 1,000 workers sat down to the simplest of food. It was a bit trying for us to eat the raw herring and the black bread, but as there was nothing else but that and some millet-soup, we had to make it do. They gave us their best. They were in a state of semi-famine, but leaders of the Soviet set the Spartan example, and lived as poorly as the rest—all for the sake of the success of the Revolution.

One night they had a great trades union gathering of welcome, and speech-making went on from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m., interspersed with excellent Russian dancing by famous artists, and songs and choruses, with, of course, the "International" thrown in. I have nothing but praise for their courtesy and kindness in their poverty and want, and wherever we went, into offices or clubs or houses, the *chi*—the *samovar*—was on duty, and we had our thin tea in glass or cup as the case may be. There were no intoxicating liquors—the vodka was all prohibited—and the fervour of the leaders of these artisans was great. It wasn't manufactured; it was the new faith, the new freedom from Tzarist tyranny they rejoiced in. Petrograd was in a derelict condition. There was a desolation in the streets that could be felt. It was more so at Petrograd than in Moscow. The shops in both places were closed, except odd ones here and there,

sealed up in most cases, while many were actually boarded up. It added to the seeming wreckage of the town when all the glow and glamour of shop-window dressing was done away with.

The thing that impressed me much was the hungry look of the people, and yet at the same time the determination of the workers to stand by the government. I think this latter stand-by was accentuated by the belief that our blockade was wrong, that the Allies were helping Poland in the new offensive, and that they wanted the Allies to withdraw intervention.

After a few days in Petrograd and seeing schools and factories and hospitals, etc., we went on to Moscow, where again our reception was most magnificent. It was worth being hungry to be in it and of it. They lodged us in one of the former hotels not far from the Kremlin. I had a bedroom, and also a sitting-room joined to it, of ample size for our delegation to hold their daily consultations in, for we were not all agreed on everything. Some were pro-revolution, some were anti-revolution, and some were unbiassed investigators. There was one point of agreement with all of us, namely, that the blockade by Great Britain and other countries should be removed and medicines and Red Cross supplies allowed in. We even subscribed amongst ourselves several pounds to buy medicinal drugs, and sent our petition home for our Labour Party to do its best to remove the blockade.

During our first night in the hotel I was awakened early on, long before getting-up time, and one of our party came and said, "Ben, has the Red Army visited you?" I didn't comprehend at first what he meant, but it seems his bedroom was buggy, and they were creeping about the

walls of his room. I had a look in mine, but I only saw odd ones during my few weeks' residence there. It seems the bedding had been stored away for the winter, and that having made the beds up again, and a little warmth having been created, the little villains had come to life again. They bite some folks sooner or keener than others, and they were so numerous in two of the bedrooms that our men changed rooms and fared better accordingly, but the Red Army, in small battalions, never really left off being neighbourly.

The day after our arrival in Moscow, a messenger came from the Kremlin, asking for me. He told me Lenin wanted to see me, and I should go to the great man as soon as possible. So I allowed him to lead me to the Kremlin, where I was taken straight through to Lenin's room. It was furnished just like an ordinary business man's office, with nothing elaborate about it. Rather was it on the severe side.

Lenin looked direct at me as I entered. My first impression was that none of the photographs I had ever seen were just to him. The rather pronounced sneer that seems inseparable from his photographs was not present in the flesh.

"Good afternoon, Comrade Turner," he greeted me, speaking slowly, and smiling a little. "I am glad to see you. Tell me, what do you and your friends think of Russia?"

He spoke perfect English, with hardly any trace of accent, and when I started to tell him our impressions he listened attentively.

I told him I thought Russia was slowly convalescing, just like a human being after a serious illness.

"Say 'operation,' rather," he said quickly.



I shrugged my shoulders, and he must have sensed my feelings. "You don't agree with our methods?" he asked.

It was a ticklish moment, but I'm from Yorkshire, and said: "To be honest, I do not."

"Your people are so prone to exaggerate things," said Lenin, speaking slowly and deliberately. "You condemn the Russian revolution because it happened in your time, and the necessity for it is clouded in your mind by the unfortunate happenings that were part of it. You abuse the Russians as cruel while hailing the French as brothers. Yet there was far more blood spilt in the French Revolution. The only difference is that you and your contemporaries were not alive when it happened, and consequently the horrors are not so vivid in your mind."

"That's all very well," I replied, "but two wrongs don't make a right. You can't justify one revolution by pointing out that another upheaval was worse."

After a pause he said:

"A revolution must be judged not by what you or anybody else thinks about it, but by its results. The Russian revolution achieved its end; therefore it was justified."

"That is for the people of Russia to say, not I," I told him. "If you want to know what I, as an Englishman, think about it, you can have it in a few words. Bloodshed is never justified."

"Yet," he said intently, leaning towards me over the table, "you will have bloodshed in England before you have a Socialist Government."

"I don't think so," I replied. "I believe I know as much about my people as you do about yours, and I know well enough that your methods

are not those of Englishmen. I don't say we won't have a revolution—we have one every five years at least—but our weapon is the ballot-box. That is the kind of revolution that will give us a Labour Government in England.”

He shook his head, and seeing his attitude, I changed the subject. For the rest of the interview we chatted about conditions in other countries.

I was very much impressed with Lenin. He is one of the few big characters in the twentieth century. He created a new world and helped to destroy a wicked Russia.

I met Trotsky. We were at the Opera House, that mighty fine structure, used now to educate the people—all the people—in the song, dance and music of the world. The place was packed. We had been previously provided with the ex-Royal Box, with its splendid ante-room and retiring rooms, and they did us proud. They were glad to see us, as we came from the mother of all reform countries, with its trade union tradition and its freedom for the Czar exiles, etc. That was why we were given the best box, the best seat, the best of what they had. When the opera had been proceeding a while, there came a whisper round the place and we heard the word “Trotsky.” It grew from a whisper to a roar, and presently Trotsky entered our box and the band faced the audience. The “International” was played and sung with force and passion and power. Trotsky bowed his acknowledgments, and the cheers for Trotsky resounded again and again. As I stood beside him in that box, taking the salute, I wondered about him. Stern, stoical, he looked; silent and passionate, and yet he was the adored of the people. There were two mighty names—there were many

other good names—but the mighty ones were Lenin and Trotsky.

When we left the box we retired into the ante-room, had our usual tea, and, through interpreters, had a long chat with the military commander, and learnt from him that he must get back to the Polish front, where the enemy were attacking the Russian revolutionaries.

I remember being in the street late one night. We had come from a convalescent home about thirty miles out of Moscow, when we heard revolver shots. I asked my guide, who talked good English, what it was. We all had stopped, of course, and he had got out. It was some white guard, traitor or spy, who had fired at Trotsky as Trotsky had been driving by on his way to the place he called home. I have often been asked if I was at all jumpy or afraid in Russia. Not at all. I might have had a bit of fear about illness, for, due to the blockade and the famine, fever was rife and typhus was raging, and the medical folks were doing all they could to keep it down and to stamp it out. America did send Red Cross supplies, and so did our Quaker friends, but we did them dirty in their time of lack of supplies of medicines, etc. That was the only fear I had—of being made ill—for I am a bit fastidious about my food. Plain bread and butter, tea, coffee, cheese and jam I can do, but that black bread broke me down at the finish. Yet my health kept generally well. I was not at all afraid of the people. They were the kindest and most courteous of folks possible.

I got lost one forenoon when I was out by myself, and wanted to go to the Red House. I had the address on a bit of paper, and after a half-hour's trudge, trying to find it myself, I

pulled a man up—a neatly-dressed, clerky kind of man—and, pointing to the paper with the address on it, indicated that I wanted to go there. He got hold of my arm, piloted me to the place, and, with true continental courtesy, raised his hat and said something in response to my thanks to him. I felt no fear at all. I mixed with Red Army men, with road workers, railway workers and others, and they were courtesy and kindness itself.

One of the big things that has attracted everybody who has been in Russia since the revolution is the care by the Soviet Government of child life. That was my impression in 1920, of which I wrote in one of the press articles sent out :

"A very large number of children's colonies, sanatoria for consumptives, and places for tackling the cure of venereal diseases have been set up, and they have had to face epidemics of typhus, cholera, and small-pox, which are simply appalling.

"So bad was typhus in one area that the doctors and staff were overwhelmed with it. The dead and dying were so numerous that the medical staff was almost powerless, and a call for volunteers was made, and one big village got 100 volunteers. They buried the dead, cleansed the houses, and made efforts at nursing.

"Many of these volunteers died, but the sacrifice was made to save the commune from extinction, and one-and-a-quarter million cases of typhus (civilian and soldiers) have been dealt with, and they have been reduced the numbers month by month.

"They have one educative cry: 'Lice are the enemy of Socialism.' They have had their health weeks with compulsory cleaning of streets and houses; they have reduced small-pox to odd cases; they have nearly abolished cholera; they have brought typhus cases down to less than 100,000 a month, and they are tackling consumption wholeheartedly.

"I went to schools for consumptive children, physical training schools for orphan children, saw children running about in a pine forest colony nearly naked, their brown

bodies baked by the sun, and being made fit for the hard life of men and women.

"I went to an adult sanatorium for consumptives, of which there are several in the country. They have educative ideals regarding health, and when they get food enough for the population they will be able to overcome such disease. They send their leaflets by the million into the villages; the trades unions teach their members laws of health, and they don't mince words.

"There are signs of poverty and illness, but owing to the coarseness, impurity and insufficiency of the black bread there is no wonder the people suffer.

"The townspeople suffer the most from want, because in the villages they have more food, they grow it and they have gardens for vegetables, and they have wood for fires. The townspeople suffer from lack of transport and also from lack of the full spirit of communism in the minds of the villagers.

"The latter have got their lands without rents, and do not like to let the surplus go to the towns without something in exchange. They have not yet reached the altruistic spirit.

"Decrees cannot change human nature, and speeches and lectures will not eradicate selfishness from men's hearts, but it is safe to say that as the land-workers and their families are 80 per cent. of the population, the working peasant—the old land labourer—was never better off in all his life.


"He works on the land he uses, he feeds his own family from his own land, he works for his own family and the state, and whilst he may be selfish (now he has got some land to use) he will never let the old landlord system re-assert itself.

"He cannot pawn the land, he cannot will it—he must use it. The selfishness exists in his not being willing to let his surplus produce go to the townspeople, and he is doing well compared with the hungry townsman who depends upon the landworker and transport for his food."

The time came when Tom Shaw, M.P., and I had to leave Russia for business and internal digestive reasons. What a fuss they made of us! Chicherin, their long-time now Foreign Minister, called

to see me, as he and I had met in Britain years before, and I had sent him, when he was an interned prisoner at Brixton Jail, books to read whilst closed up there. I had also met him at an unemployed meeting down at Ipswich, and elsewhere ; so that it wasn't unexpected that he came to see me and that I should go and see him at the Foreign Office. He gave me a message for a few friends of his in Britain, and just ere the train started out of Moscow, Lenin sent me a letter—a long letter in the nature of a manifesto—to British workers. It caused a bit of a furore when I gave it to the press, and a copy to the politicians of his school. I discharged the duty he cast upon me, and kept faith with him in the matter of publication.

We travelled back to Petrograd in a special train-de-luxe, belonging to pre-revolution days—one of the first-class coaches in which the rich used to ride, with sleeping berths, etc. We were lucky it was so, for ere we got away into Esthonia, we had to spend three nights in it. We slept in the train at Petrograd in place of going to the Princes' Palace, and the Petrograd Soviet came to wish us success. They always seemed anxious to know when England was going to have a revolution. They were proud of theirs and they couldn't really understand why we didn't follow suit, and marvelled and doubted when I told them that we could win our way to Socialism by and through the ballot-box. I remember in one of the forest rest-houses for children, the whole company of us had our eyes opened with wonderment, as a lad of about eleven years of age put it to me plump, "Why don't you have a revolution?" I have seen that statement turned round as if the lad



said, "Why don't you cut the King's head off?" It was not so at all. It was (and he was conversing with me direct): "Why don't you have a revolution?" They were taught in that forest school about the glory of their revolution, and evidently thought that Britain was as bad as Russia was in their Tsarist days.

We left Petrograd, and with the aid of a courier, who was taking messages to Reval, a Soviet leader and a German newspaper man, who was riding down in another compartment, we were the only passengers. I went into the Soviet leader's compartment as we travelled from Petrograd to the frontier, and he showed us the place where Koltchak was having him shot when the counter attack in the offensive of that villain on Petrograd was overcome and the commissary was saved, along with a few more. I saw on the table in the coach a revolver. I guess it was loaded, but I don't know, but I said, in my simple way, "Whatever are you having that for?" Our courier, who spoke good English, after repeating my query, told us that they had been attacked on several occasions by the White Guards, and it was there to use in self-defence. I don't like revolvers, and guns, but I couldn't argue things out my way.

When we got to the frontier and the other country, folks came to look at our passports. There was the deuce to do. Our passports had not been viséd by the Esthonian folks. In the mixed languages going it took Shaw and me a bit of time to learn that we couldn't get into Esthonia that night. We were as hungry as hunters. We had eaten every crumb of bread we had, for we knew that at the station buffet on the Esthonian side of the frontier there was good fare. We could see

it in the distance, but we couldn't get there. They argued and telephoned and we waited, but it was no good, and so the Soviet leader indicated that there was nothing to do but to take the train back to the first Russian frontier town. So backwards we went. Oh, what a hunger we had ! We arrived there about midnight. It was fairly light at that hour, and the local railwaymen were very good to us. A platelayer's wife made us some potato soup. She baked a kind of griddle cake—it filled a place—and by half-past one we were fed and went to bed in the train again. We were run into a siding, and once I looked out of the window and saw they had put a soldier on sentry duty. Towards four o'clock in the morning, just when I had got to my "beauty sleep," a knock at the carriage door wakened me up, and they went to Shaw's carriage door and knocked us both up. I protested at first, but they said we must go up to the local Soviet house and take food with them. They had heard of our plight, and what a reception and welcome they gave us ! About fourteen of us sat down to a meal at towards five in the morning. They had begged, borrowed or found four eggs, some bits of butter, some greens and some black bread, and, with plenty of tea, they gave us a very good meal. Toasts and talks and the "International" kept us going until nearly eight o'clock, when we made our way back to the train to get our courier moving to see if our entry into Esthonia could be secured. What a day it was ! We travelled the long distance lines to Moscow and to Reval. We sent telegrams to this person or that person. Towards night—by some good fortune—an Esthonian officer civil servant came into the town on his way from Moscow, and he agreed to



risk trying to get us into Esthonia. So away the train went down to the frontier town. Again we were held up, but by a very strong lot of talk and bargaining, he got for us permission to stay in our train on the edge of the frontier under the control of the military guards. They allowed us to go into the station and have some real food —and we did — but we had to sleep in the train again. The next day we got permission to see the General Commanding the Esthonian Army. Our first opening was met with the suggestion that we ought to be put into quarantine. I can understand it. We had come from a typhus-stricken country. However, the General melted when he saw what a hefty man my colleague was, and what a plump kind of cove I was. He put the German into quarantine, however, and allowed us to be out. We got him to try and get us on our way, and he 'phoned and wired to Reval for orders and instructions. Towards night-time Shaw and I went on to see him again, and whilst Tom could converse with him, I couldn't, but, getting a bit desperate, I pulled out five pictures of my five lasses, and a picture of my wife, and said, or blurted out, "Dash it all, get us away! I want to see those lasses." He didn't know what I said, but smiled; and in about another hour we got our permits to proceed.

We landed in Reval about seven o'clock, and made our way to the British Mission. What a greeting they gave us! How kind they were to us! We used their bathrooms, made our changes, had ■ good breakfast, talked things over, and learnt that the story had come down to them that the Russians had thrown us into prison!

We left Reval for Dundee, and found our way

home a week later, when I learnt with amazement that all kinds of stories had been sent home through the press and pressmen as to our being locked up by the wicked Russians. It so happened that I had sent from Reval to home a message of "All right ; coming home by boat to Dundee," so that when the press folks came bothering our folks about the false news telegraphed from Riga or Helsingfors, my wife knew better. She knew I was safe and on my way home.

By the way, let me just urge every husband, when away, to write home each day, if possible, to his wife and family. It's a good plan, for they are part of his life, as he is part of theirs. I travel a lot, and whilst it isn't a big virtue to do, it's a pleasant duty and a proper thing to do.

I have had much to do with some of the Russian diplomats sent over to this country since 1920 to 1927, and have even been sneered at in the Russian press because, like Lansbury, when they were being reported as hanging archbishops, etc., I urged they shouldn't kill anybody, and they termed George and me soft-headed mortals. Perhaps we are.

I have known all their British plenipotentiaries—clever, able, intelligent men—and I think this country has "mullocked" its way with Russia out of deference to the odd folks who speculated in Russian lands and mines and not in the interests of either ourselves or the Russian people. We shall grow sane some time. The death rate and the birth rate help us.

We had to have a special pass when in Russia. It was a tasty production, one side in Russian and one side in English. The print was as follows :—

**Workers of the World, Unite!**

**All Power to the Soviets of Workers, Peasants, and  
Red Army Soldiers' Deputies.**

**Welcome to Socialist Soviet Russia!**

The bearer, BEN TURNER, member of the British Labour delegation, is allowed to enter all the Soviet Institutions, the buildings of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets, and of the Council of People's Commissaries (Kremlin). Also all public institutions, theatres, concerts, etc.

All the Military and Civil Authorities are requested to render to Comrade BEN TURNER all possible assistance.

President, Moscow Soviet—L. KEMENIFF.  
Chairman, All Russian Central Council of Trades Unions,—  
M. TAMSKIT.

In the right-hand corner is the coat-of-arms of the Russian Republic—a sickle and a hammer and a sheaf of corn, surrounding a block of metal or wood.

I was and am a profound believer in opening up diplomatic and trade relations with Russia. After my return from Russia I got the following reply to a letter sent to Lloyd George :

*14th January, 1921.*

"I am desired by the Prime Minister to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 8th and 10th December, and to express regret that you have not received an earlier reply. Mr. Lloyd George shares to the full your anxiety for the Textile operatives in the present serious state of employment. The policy of resuming trade relations with Russia has been approved by the Cabinet, and the negotiations for the conclusion of a satisfactory trading arrangement with the Soviet Government have reached the stage that Mr. Krassin has just gone back to Russia with a draft acceptance to the British Government in order to consult with the Soviet authorities in person.

"At the same time, Mr. Lloyd George wishes me to say that the terrible state of economic chaos which at present prevails in Russia, and especially the breakdown of internal transport communication in that country, is such that too

much must not be expected from the restoration of trade. The opening of the Russian Market would undoubtedly afford some additional opportunities to trade for producers in this country, but it cannot, in the Prime Minister's judgment, prove an adequate panacea for the present regrettable lack of employment in certain industries in this country, which is due to trade deficiencies of a world-wide character."

## CHAPTER XIX

### PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION CONTESTS

I HAVE fought six times for Parliament, but always at home, for somehow or other I hankered after home. Dewsbury and Batley were originally one Parliamentary Borough, and after contests by Labour and Socialist candidates in 1895 and 1902 I was selected in 1906 to carry Labour's banner. It was a hard contest. Mr. Runciman was a popular man. The Conservatives were well blessed with a fine man in Mr. Boyd Carpenter, the son of the old Bishop of Ripon. I never hope to have a more gentlemanly opponent than he was, but both of us felt it was a hopeless contest.

We held meetings, and I was at the bottom. Including the £100 returning officer's fee, my election expenses came to £208. It took some raising, and it wasn't all paid. Some little of it is still owing to me.

I contested again—so did Mr. Carpenter—when Mr. Runciman became a Cabinet Minister in 1908. I believe each of us was waiting for the other to allow Mr. Runciman to have a walk-over. If we had felt that the Conservative wouldn't fight, probably we shouldn't have done. Perhaps they were in the same mood.

Mr. Runciman was not an over-pleasant fighter. This election cost over £200. Our meetings in

Easter week were magnificent. We had no cars, no paid workers, no agent, but plenty of spirit, and two hours before the poll closed a blizzard swept the Market Place. I was again at the bottom of the Poll.

Looking at my second election address in the 1908 by-election, I don't think there is a point I want to change, as I said on the frontispiece I wanted them to "Vote for the Right to Live!" "Work for the Unemployed!" "More Wage and Less Worry!" "Feeding of Hungry Children!" "Nationalisation of Land, Railways, Mines and Mineral Royalties!" "Old Age Pensions!"

In the election address itself I said amongst other things:—

"You know my views in general, having been before you on other occasions in everyday life. I am in favour of the Right to Work and the Right to Live Bill that was defeated a few days ago by the help of the present Government and the ex-Member of the Borough. It is a shameful spectacle that in these days of General National Financial Advancement nearly a million people are out-of-work, and hundreds of these dismissed in our own locality, and no attempt is made to find them the natural right to live, namely, honest work for honest men and women and I would, if returned, be one to fight hard for this being established.

"I am a Socialist, and believe in the Collective Ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and that this is the only final solution of the Poverty Problem.

"I am in favour of Legislative means to put an end to sweating, long hours and low wages.

"I am a strong advocate for a legal Eight Hours Day; State-feeding of School-children; Better housing of the Working Classes; Nationalisation of the Land, Canals, Railways, Mine Rents and Mineral Royalties, the Private Ownership of which acts as the real barrier to British Industry in the markets of the world.

I am an earnest advocate of Votes for Women; also

adult suffrage. I believe in Graduated Taxation of Incomes over £300 per year.

I am an ardent Home Ruler.

It is to the interest of our class that our Foreign Policy should be firmly and definitely directed towards International Peace and against all aggressive wars and expeditions.

I am in favour of Temperance Reform on the lines of Public Control, and against Police Inspection of Working Men's Clubs.

Remember that a vote given to me is a vote on behalf of the under-paid workers, the downtrodden and oppressed, and a vote on behalf of the hungry children in our Schools and of the Disinherited Old People.

"I pledge myself to support Pensions for all those who through old age or physical infirmity are unable to maintain themselves.

I subscribe to all these points in the election campaign of 1929.

They were not, however, vote-catching things twenty-one years ago.

In 1918 the redistribution of seats had taken place and I became the standard bearer for our party in the three boroughs of Batley, Morley and Ossett, known as the Batley and Morley Parliamentary Division, but this time our Union stood sponsor for the expenses. The electorate was nearly 39,000 including 8,000 soldiers. The old Member for the old Morley division—Mr. Gerald France—was the Coalition candidate, and I lost by over 1,400 votes.

It was a great fight. We had to wait two weeks for the count, and over 6,000 soldiers didn't get a chance to vote. I polled over 12,000 votes to Mr. France's 13,000 odd.

Prior to the nomination day the Liberal asked the Tories to meet them to join forces, and they did it completely.

Many of my supporters were certain we had won, but I felt sure we had not, and during the fortnight's wait for the count I took the liberty of writing an article and said so. Some were angry with me for doubting the result, but I had been all over the division and felt sure.

The election in 1922 was a still finer fight. We had got the Coalition over. A more sober spirit prevailed than before. The two candidates, Mr. Potter and Mr. Compston, K.C., were gentlemanly opponents. Some of their supporters were bitter and personal, but we succeeded.

When the 1923 election came along the Conservatives had no candidate, and Mr. Theodore Taylor, whom I had helped years before to get into Parliament, worked hard against me. Some of his leading supporters were on the job against me night and day, but again I won.

In my first election the written questions were numerous. I had over 400 in all. One question put was: "Is it true that Mr. Turner's wife had to weave for him when he was working in the mill as a weaver?" I could only answer that she had never worked in a weaving shed, and never been in a loomgate. Another dirty one was: "Is it true that the candidate's mother is in the workhouse?" That evening my mother happened to have gone with me to the meeting and I was able to pulverise the dirty-minded creature.

Another question at the second election was: "Is it good enough for a trade union official to swank with a gold Albert across his waistcoat?" I pulled out my watchguard, which had, up to then, always been a bit of cord.

Even in my last two elections some cruel suggestions were put by canvassers. One was "Did



Mr. Turner sit on a Committee at Wakefield when his daughter applied for a job ? ” That was a lie told to destroy faith in me.

One of Labour's drawbacks is the lack of motor conveyances. In the 1922 election both Liberal and Tory candidates had between them over 100 cars. This caused us to put on our cards :—

“ Whether you walk  
Or whether you ride,  
Vote for Ben  
When you get inside.”

I believe cars should be used only for poorly folk and old folk, so that all the candidates should be on equal lines in this direction.

I fought again in 1924—the Red Letter Election. It was a very keen struggle. The Conservatives gave the Liberal opponent great help. They canvassed every blue voter they knew, and I verily believe he got more Tory votes than Liberal, then again they were helped by the weather, for the two hours' rain at the end of the polling day stumped me. I had also unwisely agreed to the poll closing at 8 o'clock and there were hundreds of my supporters left unpolled in the various polling booths. However, the other man won and I was 405 behind him, although I polled over 900 votes more than the time before.

I had invitations years and years ago to contest for a seat in Parliament from Montrose, St. Rollox, Darlington, etc., and actually I was for a short time the Labour candidate for the Borough of Rochdale. Rochdale is a famous old co-operative and textile town. I was selected in the orthodox way, but felt short of financial backing, and it wasn't home, and I wanted to stand for home. After a few months they released me, after much pressure.

I have taken part in many elections and by-elections for other folk. Tom Mann's famous contest in Colne Valley was one of the most pleasant I remember.

When the late Sir William Byles contested East Leeds in the Boer War days I remember how keen and bitter the fight was. The late A. J. Flynn and I were addressing a crowd near Mabgate, and just at the corner was a greengrocer's shop. As the factory workers went to their work after dinner they took exception to our views and advantage of the greengrocers' shop. Potatoes, greens and rubbish were thrown at us, stopping the meeting.

Philip Snowden's contest at Wakefield was one of the hard-fought contests, and in practically all the West Riding contests have I had a bit to do during the past 35 years. I have always been as happy helping other folk as helping in my own contests.

I missed being M.P. in 1910. During the second election that year I was away in America, and whilst I was on the water the agents of our party sent to try and find me, as they wanted me to go down to Whitehaven. They tried Jimmy Holmes, the old Railwayman, also, but he couldn't be got at just then, and so Tom Richardson, the miner, was sent down, and he became their M.P., and a very good M.P. he was.

I only served in two Parliaments. Both of them were short ones, but I hope to serve in the new one.

As readers may remember, we had three elections in less than two years' time. In fact, to fight three elections between December, 1922, and October, 1924, was no light job. Physically it was hard, but enjoyable. It was also costly, for whilst our Union financed the elections up to two-thirds

of the cost, the rest had to be raised by subscriptions, and it cost me a tidy trifle; still I don't regret it.

I must say that whilst I was a quiet Member of Parliament I enjoyed being there.

I remember getting placed in Hansard the Socialist Sunday Schools' special precepts. There were one or two members of the Conservative side putting questions regularly away to Ministers about the Socialist Sunday Schools. They willfully mixed them up with the three or four Communist Sunday Schools which had precepts which no sane man could fully support. So one day I determined to defend the real Socialist Sunday Schools against these continued attacks. I did not speak long, but read the following declaration and ten precepts :—

#### DECLARATION.

" We desire to be just and loving to all our fellow men and women, to work together as brothers and sisters, to be kind to every living creature, and so help to form a New Society, with Justice as its foundation and Love its law.

1.—Love your Schoolfellows, who will be your fellow-workmen in life.

2.—Love learning, which is the food of the mind; be as grateful to your teacher as to your parents.

3.—Make every day holy by good and useful deeds and kindly actions.

4.—Honour the good, be courteous to all, bow down to none.

5.—Do not hate or speak evil of anyone. Do not be revengeful, but stand up for your rights, and resist oppression.

6.—Do not be cowardly. Be a friend to the weak, and love justice.

7.—Remember that all the good things of the earth are produced by labour. Whoever enjoys them without working for them is stealing the bread of the workers.

8.—Observe and think in order to discover the truth. Do not believe what is contrary to reason, and never deceive yourself or others.

9.—Do not think that those who love their own country must hate and despise other nations, or wish for war, which is a remnant of barbarism.

10.—Look forward to the day when all men and women will be free citizens of one fatherland, and live together as brothers and sisters in peace and righteousness.

Some attempt was made to get the Speaker to rule me out of order, but I knew how to keep in order, and got them in the records accordingly. There is no man who can object to these tenets being taught any youngster, whether at an ordinary Sunday School or at a Socialist Sunday School.

Many years ago there were Socialist Sunday Schools in Yorkshire, more than there are to-day, and oft-times they have invited me to address them at their anniversary services, and at varying times I have at the old Labour Churches or at these schools named children, or, as it would be termed, been the second principal at a christening. The child is always the first principal ! It is not done as often now as it was then, and, candidly, I don't think it is needful. If folks want a christening, let them do it in the ordinary way or let it alone. That's how it strikes me now.

A second thing I enjoyed in the House of Commons was when I brought forward a motion under the ten minutes rule, introducing a Bill to restore the land of Britain to the people of Britain. The Speaker was very kind to me ; he let me take an extra two minutes. I don't think it was because he and I were Yorkshiremen, and personal friendships existed between us, but more because I didn't often bother the House with speeches, and never said things nastily.

The late Sir Henry Craik, a kindly old Mid-Victorian, opposed my motion. There was a tight

division, and leave to introduce the Bill was defeated by 13 votes—only 13! Mr. Lloyd George had been in the House when the talk started, but despite all his land songs and his Welsh Anthems about the land for the people, he and his small forces went out, and they did not in many cases vote for the land for the people.

I expected Mr. Asquith to vote against it, for he was never a political deceiver. I had a personal respect for Asquith. I knew him as a good Home Secretary according to the times in which he lived. He didn't trim and hedge like some did and do. Then we were fellow Yorkshiremen, and I represented the town he was born in. I had chats with him at times over Yorkshire dialect, and over Huddersfield, Morley, Leeds and Yorkshire writers. It was a pleasure to hear him speak.

When I spoke in the House of Commons the first time, I was positively shy and nearly afraid. I didn't know the rules of procedure, etc., but unemployment was being discussed on the King's Speech, and I felt keenly about it, so a few minutes before eleven I got in and was pouncing away when the Speaker left the Chair. Our whips had not advised me—perhaps I ought to have known—that on the stroke of eleven the time is up. My sentence was unfinished, but I got my protest in about the lack of help for the unemployed, etc.

I didn't bother the House with many speeches. I only spoke when I felt keenly, and did not speak as often as I would have liked, and never spoke at length. The best men can say all they need say in thirty minutes, but Front-Benchers will stick to speaking an hour at a time, and often other Members were pushed out.

I did a through night or two, but I learnt in the

second Parliament that it wasn't worth it. It came to be and is more of a game than a necessity. The division lobbies are not a true test of a man's parliamentary value, and some Members attend in the period when they know many divisions will be taken, especially during the Budget and finance periods, and who are mostly counters and not politicians. This applies to all sides, but more so to the old parties than to Labour.

I had many questions put to me as to why MacDonald did not put me in his Ministry. I urged, when we had the meeting to decide that Labour should go into office, that MacDonald should be allowed a free hand, and not be pestered with applications.

I voted in both Parliaments against all military expenditure. I am a pacifist of an extreme school, and wouldn't make or have made a bullet or a gun or a war vessel or a bomb or poison gas at any price under any odds or circumstances, and voted with the thirteen Labour men against our own Labour Government on these matters, and as Labour allows freedom for its members on very acute matters of personal principle as in the case of Roman Catholicism, so odd 'uns of us voted against our own Government on high principle.

During the time I was in Parliament I made many friends. Decent Tories have publicly and privately said they missed me from the place. It wasn't my politics they missed, but perhaps my human attitude to everybody. Every policeman in the House was friendly with me. They are yet. In the two Parliaments I must have shown a couple of thousand folks round the House of Commons, and House of Lords, into the crypt and other places, and always found every policeman, from

inspector to constable, a real help, as also were the many attendants about the place.

An active Labour man finds Parliament no sinecure. I used to get down by about 10 a.m., get my letters from the Post Office, answer as many as I could before committee time, get a bun and an apple and some tea for a lunch, and get back to the House for prayers. I always liked to be in at prayers. I am not religious in the orthodox sense, but the prayers were always a treat to me. The Front Bench men don't come into prayers. I think it is a mistake, but they say it is an old custom for them to remain outside the Chamber until prayers are over, and then to come trooping in like a lot of school truants !

In my simplicity I once asked the Speaker why they did that, and if they were past praying for ! Some of them are, but it would do them good and be a good example to others.

By-the-way, I was very sorry to refuse a Cabinet Minister's request to serve him as his private secretary. It wasn't because I didn't like him, for he is one of my dearest and longest known friends, but because I couldn't be tied up owing to my Trades Union Congress and Trades Union work. Being a private secretary to a Minister is very useful to him in his duties, and if I had been a much younger man and less busy I would gladly have done it.

During my time in Parliament my wages as a Union official were forgone. The Union gave me £100 a year to help my living expenses, and I was financially worse off as a Member than before, but I didn't and don't grumble. I got enough, and that's all there is about it ; but it is a costly job keeping two homes going, getting deputations to tea, sending innumerable letters and travelling

about. It improved a bit when they paid us our fares.

I was unable to act in concert with our Labour Government in the 1924 Parliament when they went in for five cruisers as against eight proposed by their predecessors. Our ministers of State did their job as well as they could, but I am certain one or two of them had a tough job to reconcile their principles, their conscience, and their State functions. I find that on March 24th I spoke on the building of five cruisers:—

#### MR. BEN TURNER OPPOSES NEW CRUISERS.

##### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

“ In the House of Commons, on Tuesday, during a discussion on the Naval Estimates, which provided for the building of five new cruisers, Mr. Ben Turner, supporting an amendment that the cruisers were not required, said: ‘ I desire to speak in favour of the amendment and against the building of any cruisers whatever. They may be termed replacements or anything you like, but I am against every form of armament, whether naval, military, or in the air. I have been a student or reader of political affairs for a long time, and I remember that this question of the reduction of armaments has been in the air for more than 40 years of my lifetime, yet we seem to be as far distant from it to-day as we were in those far-off days of last century. When the Washington Conference was held, great hopes were aroused in the breasts of many working people that at last something tangible and practical was going to be done in the nature of stopping the mad race of naval armaments, but from the talk all round the House to-day, and from the atmosphere that has been displayed since this Parliament resumed, there seems to be no possibility of the old ideals of John Bright being accepted by the ordinary powerful politicians on any of the Front Benches of this House. I stand where John Bright stood, when he took that memorable stand against the bombardment of Alexandria. I believe that force is no remedy, that force fails absolutely



in every essential, and that force is contrary to the principles of the New Testament, which was repudiated by the Hon. Member for Penistone (Mr. Pringle) in his observations last evening (interruption). Our Air Minister may be forgiven for his innocent ignorance as a new Minister of State, and, therefore, not as qualified as is the hon. Member for Penistone in regard to the arrangements of this House. There have been 8,000 wars in 3,000 years.

" Viscount Curzon: Hear, hear.

" Mr. Ben. Turner: The noble Lord the Member for South Battersea (Viscount Curzon) is evidently anxious for some more, judging by the speed with which he wants to have cruisers built to develop our naval force still further. The very cheerfulness with which he gave us the figures for Italy, France, and other nations, showing how they are building cruisers, and asked us to go at a bigger speed than we are going, is evidence that he is anxious to prepare for, as he says, the next war, but we have always been preparing for war, both at sea and upon the land. That has been the policy of the Front Benches in the days gone by, and it seems to be the policy of the Front Benches to-day. I remember the old music-hall song:—

" We don't want to fight,  
But, by jingo, if we do.

Evidently it is the ideal song of the noble Lord opposite and a few more members of this House. This question of the enlargement sounds strange talk to me, when we ought to be talking about the limitation and the abolition of everything that means force in this kingdom. You have got to do one thing or the other. You have either to scrap the preparations for war, or scrap the New Testament, and I am not going to scrap the New Testament. I am going to stand for the New Testament as against this policy of cruisers. An hon. member asked whether we believe in the ideal embodied in the New Testament, that if a man smite you on one cheek you should turn the other. That is the finest way to stop war and violence. The example of peacefulness is the finest thing in this world of ours. If you continue the other policy, you continue the preparations for warfare so glibly talked about by the noble Lord. The hon. Member for Penistone (Mr. Pringle), in his concluding observations yesterday, said: 'It is simply an absurd futility in those days to talk of expecting the nations

of the world to have their conduct governed by the Sermon on the Mount.' I will stand by the Sermon on the Mount. It is the great fundamental and moral principle that will save all nations from destruction. Every day prayers are said when this House opens—magnificent prayers—but the Front Bench do not go to them, although they need them more than anybody else. If the Ten Commandments are right, and the Sermon on the Mount is right, then building cruisers cannot be right, because it is contrary to the principle contained in the 'Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.

"Yesterday an hon. Member, who, I think, is a Quaker, and represents a neighbouring borough of mine, tried to excuse himself, and may do so again to-day, on the ground that if we do not have the Army and Navy, there will be a large number of persons unemployed. It was his excuse as a Quaker on the question of a reduction (hon. Members: No.) I beg hon. Members' pardon. Let them look at the official report, and they will find that one of his observations was as to what you would do with the 150,000 men displaced in connection with the Army. The same kind of observation would apply if the Navy were disbanded. There would be unemployed persons. I am old enough to have seen a large number of municipal and public employees dispossessed of their offices. Whenever they have been dispossessed of their offices by new laws, they have always been compensated. I refer to clerks to Boards of Guardians, Urban District Councils, and so on, in amalgamations. They have all been provided for on dispossession of office. The same ought to apply to the ranks of the Army and Navy, and it is cheaper to do that than to employ them in a useless system that means destruction in general. I am also a believer in the League of Nations without force. One of the blots upon the League of Nations' proposals concerns force, with which, I think, Lord Robert Cecil, as he then was, clothed it a few months ago. I want peace, and to prepare for peace. All the talk to-day has been of preparation for war. Nobody has the right to take the life of a single individual, and I stand with Russell Lowell:

"If you take a sword an' draw it,  
And you stick a feller thru,  
Government 'aint to answer for it,  
God will send the bill to you."

## CHAPTER XX

### CHURCH AND CHAPEL

**MANY** a time folks like myself have said some hard things about the Church and the Chapel. Too often we had reason to do it, but during my time, especially during the past thirty years, I have been blessed with friendship with Church and Chapel leaders, and my criticism of the Churches and Chapels, whilst not dissipated, has undergone a change.

I was thankful years ago to know and speak on the same platform with Father Adderley in his advocacy of Socialism. Many many years ago I was privileged to know Canon Donaldson, the little great man, who is always preaching Socialism. What a grand couple he and his wife are ! What a freedom of personality there is about them !

When I first stood for Parliament in 1906 I met an exceptionally fine man in Father Bull, of the House of Resurrection, Mirfield. I call it the place where they make parsons. Perhaps it's an irreverent way of describing that fine Church and College just outside Mirfield. The following card of invitation to a conference in the noted natural outdoor speaking place in the quarry of the grounds shews what we discussed so long ago.

CONFERENCE OF SOCIALISTS AND CLERGY AT THE HOUSE  
OF RESURRECTION, MIRFIELD, April 27th, 1927, 2.30-6.30.

Delegate's Ticket No. II.

*Chairman* : Rev. Fr. Frere, C.R.

*Selected Speakers* :

Mr. J. R. Clynes, M.P., N.E. Manchester.

Ald. Ben Turner, Batley.

Coun. Tom Myers, Thornhill, Lees.

Rev. L. Donaldson, Leicester.

H. Kemp, Bradford.

Rev. Fr. Healey, C.R.

Rev. Fr. Bull, C.R.

We discussed Old Age Pensions. We went in for Adult Suffrage. We asked for the vote for women on the same terms as men.

The year before, Hardie was the principal speaker, and this conference was the second one in the grounds.

Father Frere is now the Bishop of Truro, and true to the faith of Socialism. Father Bull is still travelling about the world preaching the doctrine of love and brotherhood. I don't understand all their points and proceedings, but I know they are great good men, and help on good social movements. They have built a great church and hostel near to Leeds University, where four of the Fathers from the headquarters at Mirfield guide and look after about fifty university graduates who are at work in Leeds University. These young men serve three years at the University, then two years at the College, and then, if suitable by their training, become clergymen, ready to go out to any part to which they are sent. Many of them are already in the Labour movement, for when I went to speak to the Labour Section of Leeds University this February, out of the 200 students I addressed, both young men and young women (both folks from

Britain and from other lands), these young men from the hostel made me right welcome, and proved to me their earnest advocacy of Labour's cause. Some of the House of Resurrection people at Mirfield have never failed to give a hand in the Parliamentary Contests in Spen Valley, Dewsbury and Batley.

Another good Bishop I have had very long friendship with is the retired Bishop of Wakefield. How helpful he was in the housing agitation in Yorkshire long before the war! What a world of support he gave us to our agitation for Old Age Pensions! I am afraid I may have hurt him a little when I once met him in Leeds during the latter part of the war, when some of us were urging a negotiated peace, for I bluntly said, as I drew out my soldier's testament, "The Churches have scrapped this book." He gently said "Nay, nay, Mr. Turner," but I did feel it a bit at the time that when clergy were calling upon God to bless the killing that was needlessly—to my mind—going on, they had forgotten the Prince of Peace. He was a dear old Bishop, and I prize his friendship deeply.

Another big Church dignitary was the present Archbishop of Canterbury. I knew him when he was curate at Leeds, years and years ago. The late George Thomson—the best pioneer of Labour Co-partnership I ever knew—invited him to the annual meeting of the firm of Wm. Thomson & Sons, Ltd. As a shareholder of a very limited sort, I had been speaking about capitalism and the slow growth of co-operation, and he, in a very gentle but educated style, took me to task for wanting to move too quickly ahead. It was so nicely done that it had no offence in it and was

really a wisely put point. I remember speaking with him at a great meeting in Dewsbury Town Hall just after he became Archbishop of York, and reminding him of that long ago incident. I was sorry to miss being present at his enthronement at Canterbury Cathedral. I was in the printed list of those allocated a seat—the only untitled man in the section where I was provided with a seat. I have a great admiration for His Grace of Canterbury.

The present Archbishop of York is one of my friendly folks. As a leading helper of the Workers' Educational Association he has done giant work for adult education. I have only spoken with him once, a few years ago at Rochdale, one Sunday afternoon, when, as Bishop of Manchester, he was showing his love and faith in religion and democracy and education. I did meet him again at a plain lunch in January, when the Christian Students' Movement had their worldwide conference and they made me one of their guests and one of their chief speakers. What a jolly man the Bishop looks, and it proves quite well that ■ real Christian needn't—nay, shouldn't—live in the dark places, but be human, and live lively and helpfully, and not dolefully and hard and unsympathetic to human relationships.

Strange to say, I have not known many Non-conformist ministers—leading ministers—but I had a great admiration for that lovely old religious Mussolini, the old General Booth, and spoke with him twice at gatherings many years ago.

In recent years I have had many calls to speak at brotherhoods and in some established churches. I don't think I talk orthodoxy, and, perhaps, may wound when I don't mean to, but I can't trim,

neither will I wilfully wound, but if Religion is to live with Labour it has got to be the religion of life and love, and a step towards a heaven on earth. It's no good otherwise. In my forty minutes' talk to the 1,000 students from all parts of the world, at the Christian Students' Convention at Liverpool, *The Telegraph* report says :

" Mr. Turner is President of the National Union of Textile Workers and has taken a leading part in the conferences with Lord Melchett and other employers. He was cheered by 2,000 delegates when he said that what kept him young in faith and hope for a saner Britain was the assurance he felt that there would evolve in this land a state of society based on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. The subject of his address was ' God at work in industry.' There was, he said, an ever-growing movement to humanise and Christianise life in the shop, mine, and factory.

" ' There is just now,' he said, referring to the trade union conferences with Lord Melchett, ' an effort to get employers' associations and trade unions acting together to prevent lock-outs and strikes. Some of my friends hold that the move is one to rationalise industry so as to extract more profit for the shareholders. This may apply to odd ones blinded with passion for power and riches, but I hold that many employers are willing to explore any avenue that will lead to industrial peace and social happiness.

" ' That cannot be, of course, so long as we simultaneously make one millionaire and ten thousand poor people, or the few become the over-wealthy and the many become paupers. There can be no abolition of industrial strife on the old plan of every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. I am not without hope that the Mond-Turner conferences or " talks " will lead to a better understanding in industry. It was time that we had them. They are the outcome of men's desires to end the class war and sectional frictions.'

#### GAMBLING CRAZE.

" Referring to dog-racing, horse-racing, night club life and Stock Exchange 'gambling,' he said : ' This hankering after " summat for nowt," this craze to be fashionable, is not in the best interests of the nation, and if these " talks "

can lead to a simplicity of life—not a mean, but a simpler mode of life—it will be for the good of society.’

“Mr. Turner further expressed the desire to see gentleness carried into industry, less bullying, more clean language and an absence of cringing to the boss or tale-telling and meanness towards another. ‘I want to see a more co-operative spirit inside the works, and men not looked upon as mere numbers or pegs.’”



## CHAPTER XXI

### FORMING TRADES COUNCILS

THE first minute book of the second Dewsbury and District Trades Council contains the following record: "Meeting held Royal Hotel, Dewsbury, June 25th, 1891. A number of Trades Unionists met together on the invitation of Mr. B. Turner, and the advisability of forming a Trades and Labour Council was thoroughly discussed, and a resolution was adopted in favour of one, that Messrs. Ibbotson, Oldroyd, Richards, Brailsford, Turner, Farnhill and Hill be a pro tem. committee to draft a circular calling a representative meeting for July 9th.—Ben Turner, Secretary pro tem."

A meeting was held on July 9th, the late Mr. Ibbotson, a noted blacksmith, being elected chairman pro tem., and on July 23rd the present Trades Council was brought into being, and I held the post of secretary from then until I felt compelled to resign owing to pressure of other work about ten years ago.

Looking over the old first minute-book, I find we took part in an agitation to stop a man being in charge of two horses and carts in towns. We went before several town councils with that proposal, and, I think, proved it was a system, in hilly parts like ours, of half strangling the second horse with the second cart tied to the tail of the

first cart, and also that it kept a man out of work by making one man take charge of two carts and two horses.

We tried to get builders' labourers' wages up to 5d. per hour, and later to 6d. per hour, with a halfpenny extra for plasterers' labourers.

I remember going into a builders' labourers' meeting one Sunday afternoon in a neighbouring town, when pint pots flew across to the contending persons, for a bit of drink was in and a lot of courtesy went out. They were fighting with one another over the terms they ought to go in for. Some were for a twopence per hour advance, and some for a penny. They got a halfpenny by a short strike.

I always was, and am yet, for conciliation before a strike. I urged the local Chambers of Commerce—there wasn't an employers' association in the district in those days—to join with the Trades Council and form a local conciliation board covering several towns. We got an agreement, and one was formed, but when it came to be tested, one of the leading townsmen, Mr. Walmsley, wouldn't have it used in connection with trouble at his mill. Others looked upon it as a conciliation board on paper, and it slept out of existence after a few years' trial.

I see we discussed Employers' Liability Act amendments in those far-off days—asking for amendments on one line or another, and condemning the House of Lord for inserting, as they did, ■ contracting out clause in the Act. What a change from then to now, and it is less than forty years ago, and the Workmen's Compensation Act has had its improvements, and there is a new one likely in the new Parliament, which will humanize

sure you will never even dream of allowing us simple working men to have to raise the funds to pay for Mr. Parr's broken time." Mr. Mitchell at once said: "No, he can have time off for his magisterial duties if appointed, and he will not have his wages deducted." They were always very good when I appeared before the board on anything, and they were on that point, and later on Mr. Parr was appointed.

From this Trades Council I set about helping to form the Spen Valley Trades Council, later on the Morley one, and now the West Riding is a network of Trades Councils, and I can claim to have helped them all on in some simple or humble way, and the Federated Trades Councils of Yorkshire is the outcome of the lot.

Trades Councils have had to change their form owing to the new Trades Union Act. They have to be industrial only, but it will take a Philadelphia lawyer all his time to stop an industrial Trades Council from dealing with laws present and prospective, which all hinge on political activity.

By the way, I was once on a deputation with one of the Dewsbury Trades Council delegates to a government department. We stayed at Anderson's Hotel in Fleet Street, and they were so crowded that they put three beds in the smoke-room, with its doors opening either way. When we were getting to bed, my colleague said: "I suppose it's safe. I've about £20 in my pocket." "Oh," said I, "put it under your pillow and it's all right." He wasn't satisfied, however; it was his first trip to London and he had heard how clever and wicked they were in that city! He couldn't rest, and he got up and turned up the gas, looked round, and then took some chairs and reared

them against the door, so that anyone coming in the door would have to fall over them and make a clatter which would waken us. He was a skilled workman—a craftsman of repute—but I called him all sorts of names in the morning, when we got up, for the doors opening either way his chair barriers were of no use whatever! His money was safe, so he said how glad he was, as he intended to go to the National Gallery, and if he saw a picture he fancied, meant to spend some of the £20. I told him not to talk “daft,” as the pictures were not for sale, and that £20 would hardly buy ■ frame, never mind a picture. For an intelligent man in many directions he was ignorant on worldly affairs. This is so in many cases, including my own. I know some things fairly well, but on what seems ordinary to other folks I know next to nothing. None of us know enough, and some of us know a lot too little of the elementary things affecting life.

As secretary of the Dewsbury and Batley Trades Councils (a post which I held for the first twenty-five years) it crossed my mind that there should be some unity of action with Trades Councils, so a number of us who met together at our union office decided to call a meeting of delegates from the then few trades councils in Yorkshire. We held a preliminary conference in 1894, and decided to fix up a federation. They made me the first secretary, and I held the post for the first eleven years, and had a second spell later on, making a total of twenty-one years, with which they honoured me with the unpaid post.

It is now the biggest and best federation in the kingdom and has done and is doing big work in the unity of unions and the unity of trades councils.

One of my early tasks was to try and get magistrates made for the West Riding of Yorkshire. At that time Labour had only one Labour man on the benches of the West Riding, and he was made more as a Liberal-Labour politician than a Labour man. For several years it became my business to go to Wakefield to see the Clerk of the Peace for the Riding and take him a list of men we believed were entitled to sit on the bench. Every time there was included in my list the name of Herbert Smith, the present President of the Miners' Federation and the President of the Yorkshire Miners' Association. At that time Herbert was also a member of the West Riding County Council, and as such was a thorn in the flesh of the big wigs of the day. I remember stressing his name very very strongly, but it was no use. I was told plainly that he wouldn't be made—at present—and it took many years of pleading to get his right to be one recognized.

I was struck with the very openness and personal fairness of the Clerk of the Peace in fulfilling his duties as representing the Lord-Lieutenant.

One year I took a list of thirty-three names, and went over the list with him. He knew much more about the folks than I did. I wondered how that was. I learnt later on, but it seemed that with every ordinary name that was sent up, enquiries were made in the locality of the bench they would sit upon if appointed, and some of the old-stagers not wanting Labour men appointed gave all the news they could that was not favourable.

On another list being taken to him he again bluntly told me Herbert Smith would not then be made, and he was not, but he also informed me

that one of our other nominees was an alien. I was startled. He had a pro-British name and I had known him personally many years, but had to withdraw it, for the proof was too plain. He was a decent man, but had not been naturalized.

Another man pointed out to me as not being eligible was, he said, connected with the drink trade. Certainly, I admitted, he had kept a public-house, but didn't keep one then, but Mr. Darwin proved to me he still owned a licensed house, and was thus struck out.

They were a very limited lot we got—never more than three. I remember arguing with the Clerk one time for a lot more, but evidently his instructions were for three only, and whilst I pleaded for at least six, the fiat had gone forth and we only got three. This, of course, was before the days of Advisory Committees.

The Clerk put me in the list in 1908, and it has been ■ useful position for many callers. At one time I had innumerable forms to sign, but since the National Women's Advisory Committee made the first list of magistrates eight years ago, which included my wife, she has been able to help in this work, for despite illness preventing her from attending the police court she signs every week many papers for unemployment, vaccination exemptions, widows' pensions, etc., etc.

When the Government of the day established advisory committees, our Labour group on the County Council decided to ask for two Labour men being put upon the County Advisory Committee. Alderman Hardaker and myself were chosen by the group, and our names went forth. By some means or other the West Riding Bench at Dewsbury got the names before them, due, I think,

to some members of the County Council being brother magistrates with me. However, there was a select secret meeting of a few of them, called by telephone one morning a half-hour before the court time, and they considered these nominees and decided to send a deputation to the authorities, objecting to a "Bolshie" being put upon the Advisory Committee. Their views prevailed, and they kept me off. I didn't make any fuss about it, for the man selected was a very fine man, only it did show me that the "big-wigs" of that period didn't mind holding secret meetings to upset what the County Council Labour Group had sent forward. I only learnt of this secret meeting months afterwards, when one of the magistrates present at the secret meeting told me the whole story.

Since that time the making of magistrates up to 1928 has been on a better line. Labour got its 33½ per cent. of the total made until 1926. When 1926 came along the new lists for the West Riding had been sent up to the Chancellor in London, the nominees had got their letters—the formal letters asking if they consented to be nominated—and then came the miners' lock-out and the short general strike. As a result, the names were held up for over a year, and when they were reissued in 1928, there had been a big revision. Some nominees had died in the meantime, but some miners' leaders had been "wiped off" the list. The powers that be wouldn't have them. The Labour men on the Advisory Committee fought hard for their retention, but it was no good. The "wangle" had taken place.

There is not an equality of magistrates on the West Riding Bench to-day, and the old plan of

putting up young squires or old squires' sons because they were the squires' sons has been returned to. Perhaps a better system—a more equitable one—may come back again with a more democratic authority in office and in power. I hope so.

I gave evidence before the Royal Commission on Selection of Magistrates in 1910. I find in one of the newspapers the following report :—

" Alderman Ben Turner, J.P., of Batley, gave evidence before the Royal Commission on the Selection of Justices of the Peace, which again met at Scotland House, Westminster, on Wednesday, Lord James of Hereford, presiding. Alderman Turner made some striking remarks, advocating a system of popular election of magistrates, the voters to be those on the municipal register, and to include women.

" In the course of his statement, to the Commission Alderman Turner said there was need for more working men Justices, especially to deal with begging cases, for many of the magistrates, who did not understand the poverty problem, were quite unable to distinguish between real begging and loafing. That lack of knowledge, he thought, was responsible for the want of confidence in justice. Until some system of appointment replaced the political one, regard ought to be given to the sections of the population. In industrial centres there should be a greater proportion of working men on the bench. He strongly advocated popular election.

" Lord Robert Cecil: Do you think you would get a better class of magistrates by popular election?—You couldn't get a worse. (Laughter.)

" Lord James of Hereford: We have come here to make them better.

" Lord Robert Cecil: Your ideal would be to have stipendiaries everywhere you could, with elected magistrates to assist them?—Yes; in the big boroughs and industrial centres.

" I see you say fanatics get elected, as well as decent men. What kind of fanatics?—Religious, anti-religious, temperance, anti-temperance, and the various sorts knocking about. (Laughter.)



"Do you think more are selected than decent men?—No.

"And you think the election of fanatics is due to the party system?—Yes, they vote for the Member of Parliament, and get appointed.

"Witness said that, under a system of popular election, the voters would be those on the municipal register, including women. 'Women have more sense,' he explained.

"Lord R. Cecil (laughing): Quite right. Do you mean in a political sense?—Yes.

"Lord R. Cecil (turning to the Chairman, who looked amused): I quite agree with him."

## CHAPTER XXII

### WOOL CONTROL AND WAR CONDITIONS

DURING the years of the War, the Government set up numerous Committees to help and advise them, and probably I sat on as many Committees as most folks.

Perhaps the biggest bit of work was done in the Wool Control Department. It was the Socialist productive experiment of the War.

Soldiers and sailors needed cloth and clothing, and Private Enterprise could not do it. The Raw Wool Supplies needed rationing, and the Minister in this department was the Hon. H. Foster. It put me in close activity with Sir Arthur Goldfinch, the head of the Raw Wool Section. Sir Arthur is a man of great ability, he knew the stocks of wool on hand, the prospective supplies, the risks vessels ran of being blown up, and had around him a staff of experts like Lord Barnby (Colonel Willey) and advisers including an equal number of Textile Workers' Representatives, and Textile Employers.

I was also a member of the Substitution Committee presided over by Sir Francis Watson, M.P.—then plain Mr. Watson. This Committee had to consider cases of men claiming exemption from joining up on account of trade indispensability. Some of the most warlike of men were anxious not

to go and fight themselves, and some who professed they wanted to go attempted to prove they couldn't be spared for business reasons. We tried to be fair, but one felt a contempt for some, whilst others I helped to get back to their business and their work. There were a few attempts at bribery, but they soon found their place and the Committee tried to do the square thing. Another Committee was set up under Sir Eric Geddes and Mr. Neville Chamberlain, namely, the National Service Committee. This met at the Windsor Hotel in London. I attended a few times but it seemed to land nowhere except in docketing cases and issuing reports. I was appointed a member of the Profiteering Committee and of the Costing Committee under the Profiteering Committee. It was a very interesting time on this Committee. Sidney Webb and E. F. Wise were experts at the job. It established an elaborate costing system which has been useful to many a manufacturer since, whilst its reports are an eye-opener as to how profits slipped on to men and firms. It was made plain to me how middlemen live.

I know they do a service, but in cloth and linings and in supplies of one sort and another, the middlemen worked on the principle of fixing their selling price at 33½ per cent. on selling price or 50 per cent. on buying price.

One case of cloth Snowballing will show the example. We had a firm up before the Committee to show cause why they shouldn't be prosecuted for profiteering. The cloth was a costume cloth. The price from the mill was 11s. 9d. per yard. When it left the agents' books—it never went into his hands—it became 13s. 9d. When it left the wholesaler's hands it became 21s. 9d. When

it left the tailors for the woman to wear, the cloth had risen to 27s. 9d. per yard. We ordered a prosecution, but somebody stopped it.

One of the best Committees I served upon was the Workers' War Emergency Committee. This Committee tried to show the Government the way to meet the emergencies that were arising (both in foodstuffs and in other ways) during the War, and also how to meet the emergencies and troubles that would arise after the War. Their reports were presented to many heads of Departments, but their advice was taken too late if taken at all.

I served for several years upon the Special Grants Committee in connection with the Ministry of Pensions. Mr. Barnes, one of my oldest and dearest Trades Union friends, appointed me to this Committee, and along with Mrs. McKenna, Mrs. Shakespeare, Miss Kelly, Sir Frederick Stopford and others I put a lot of time in during the few years I remained there.

I did much night and day travelling during this Committee work, but I have no regrets, for the work was useful and was the least a civilian could do.

There were no salaries for these jobs. Expenses were limited to less than most Trades Unions paid for their work, but it was much easier work than being in the mud and slime of France or Flanders.

I could have had a very well paid job early on in the War in connection with civilian work, but I didn't want it.

During the War, and for a while after the War, I went upon numerous deputations and attended many Conferences. I remember going with our late Town Clerk to the launching of the National Savings Committee at the Guildhall, London.

As the rich cars and gaudy equipages came and went to the Guildhall with their richly-dressed Society folks, I said to Mr. Craik, "National Savings should have a better start and a better example from these folks."

I visited the War Office on several occasions on Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Deputations and once or twice met Lord Kitchener and Lord Derby. Kitchener didn't seem to me the silent sphinx-like clever chap made out to be. Whilst there one day on a deputation with the Labour Party E.C., there flitted through the room Sir Edward Carson; and I remarked to a colleague, "There goes the King of Ulster." He seemed to me a strong dare-devil kind of masterful man.

When Mr. Lloyd George was Minister of Munitions he called a few conferences. He was *AI* at a conference, for he can "talk a duck off its peak." On one of these occasions he had before him on the table shells of varying sizes, and he showed us the prices of production and pleaded for dilution and mass production so that the men in the line could have supplies. He was a Trojan at that work and could make black at least look light-coloured, or white seem very dark.

I was at Downing Street on several occasions during the past ten years. When the liquor restrictions were at their strongest, a threefold deputation waited upon Mr. Lloyd George from three sections of Temperance Reformers. There were the Lief Jones section, the late Sir T. P. Whitaker's section, and Smillie and I represented the section in favour of Public Control of the Traffic. The deputations were at first to be received separately, but it was suggested that all three should go in together and properly save the overworked

Prime Minister his time. When the speechmaking came along it was a regular "barney." The Lief Jonesites and the Whitakerites were at Temperance enmity with each other. The Prime Minister enjoyed it. I was surprised at it. The interview was useless because of the intemperance of the teetotalers.

I was a member of the deputation which waited upon Mr. Bonar Law when he, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave us that speech in which he declared for a "Capital Levy." I know we came away thinking we had got a real convert.

When Lloyd George called the Great Conference of Representatives of the Employers and Employed in the Central Hall, London, to start the National Industrial Council I was sent as a delegate by our Union. It looked as though a new era had set in. The Prime Minister pleaded for one. The legal eight-hours day and a legal minimum wage seemed secure, but, alas, the two things are coming yet.

When the Health Insurance Act was started in 1911 the Government fixed up an Advisory Committee to help its flotation, and I was asked to serve upon it, and did so until its end.

We often had Lloyd George with us at those meetings. He was under Asquith's Prime Ministership, and did a great work when he floated this Act of Parliament.

When the Unemployment Insurance Act was being extended to the General Industries of the Kingdom the Government Department established a Committee for Textiles. The workers' side made me their chairman and we met a few times until the Act had got on to its feet. When the local Committees were established the Department asked me to send in a list of names who would be

suitable as chairmen. I did my best. They chose most of them in Textile centres on my advice.

It will be perhaps realized that my years have been crowded, especially this century. In fact, I have never been idle in my life. I have "laiked (played) hard" and worked hard, and have put in thirty-seven years of service, useful or otherwise, in voluntary public work. Every man should do all he can for the public and the people's well-being.



OFF DUTY

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE KING'S VISIT TO BATLEY

ON the King's first visit to Batley in 1913 (when he made a tour of Yorkshire) I sent him a petition from myself to Wentworth House—the home of Earl Fitzwilliam. It may be said it was a cheeky thing to do, but I don't apologize for having sent it. It contained my pre-war sentiments on textile and other wages and women's votes. The petition was as follows :

" To His Gracious Majesty King George and Her Gracious Majesty Queen Mary :

" Your Majesties—

" Please allow me to present to you the petition of an active citizen of the realm, pleading with you to call upon those who have means, and authority, and power, to end the incessant overtime and the needless nightwork, that destroy the physique of man, and upset the comfort of home life.

" I also ask you to call upon the people in authority to institute the much-needed system of 30s. a week minimum wage for men, and not less than 20s. a week for women workers in our textile factories. If this is done it will tend towards improved housing, temperate life, better home trade, more food and clothing, and better times for our shop-keepers.

" If the working people are assured of a minimum income in this direction, it will mean more comfort for mothers, more honours and contentment for men and fathers, and a brighter chance for the children.

"I plead with you to suggest these modest claims upon the captains of industry who control the great concerns in this our beloved county and country.

"May I also plead with your Majesties that the women of this realm may be given the right to vote on the same terms as men? 'God bless all women,' we say in song and toast, and I beg that your Majesties may speak the necessary words that will lead to this wise and just reform.

"I am, your Majesties' most obedient servant,

BEN TURNER."

Of course, I got the usual courteous reply that it would be sent on to the Home Office and I got a reply, saying nothing, from the Home Office, and yet—not because I had any influence—the 30s. men's minimum and women's votes came out of the blood and sorrow of the Great War.

On this occasion, of course, I was presented to the King in the Market Place. The presentations were limited to five or six, and I heard afterwards that there was a bit of a row over the choice. I had nothing to do with it, but as one of the oldest in service they dared not keep me out. It wouldn't have mattered to me, but they put me in the list and I did the courtesies like anybody else.

The second time their Majesties came was during the War. Our county had turned out from its looms scores of miles of khaki cloth for the Army, Navy and Allies. There also happened to be an uneasy feeling that kings and queens were not as popular as before, and there was an anti-king feeling growing in this kingdom.

When their Majesties came to visit our mills, Sir Charles Sykes arranged for the Wool Control Section of the Cloth Department, of which I was a member, to take part in the mill processions and visitations.

The King and Queen visited Spinkwell Mills,

Dewsbury, and the firm had a splendid arrangement for their old employees to watch the Royal progress through the mill. As we marched through the mill I was piloting an admiral or some such dignitary. Just at that time I was fairly popular, and noting this he said to me: "Why, you've a bigger reception than the King!" It is true that when I went along the workpeople shouted "Good old Ben!" and I was really made much of. The old admiral said, "You seem very popular here, Mr. Turner." "Aye," I replied, "you can be up the pole one day and down in the gutter the next." When we got to Batley and, in fact, wherever we went that day, there was a good feeling towards me.

I had a chat with the King and Queen, and told Her Majesty that our Yorkshire lasses were amongst the best and purest in the world, and to the King, in our short chat, I held that "a Yorkshireman's 'Nay' is his 'Nay,' his 'Yea' is his 'Yea,' and if you don't like it, well, yo' can darned well please yoursen."

We went to Huddersfield, and visited the mill at which I once worked as a weaver. The cloths they had on view were fine worsteds of the very best type, but I had a bit of a "take-down" here, for one or two of my old mates in the mill who knew me in my Republican days said to me, "I didn't think tha'd be i' this procession, Ben." It was a good way of taking me down.

As we proceeded into Colne Valley, one of the staff officers noticed the slack reception the King and Queen got. There was little cheering, and he asked me why. He showed me also a leading article in a York paper which had also pointed out the lack of enthusiasm the day before in another

part of Yorkshire. My answer was in the form of a question: "Is the visit to these industrial centres to popularize Royalty?" From his answer I gathered that as thrones were toppling in other countries they were a bit concerned in this country and the industrial visits had been arranged for the purpose of showing their Majesties these centres of industry and of strengthening the loyalty to King and Empire. I feel sure that was the reason.

I have only been to Buckingham Palace three times. Once was when I was given the O.B.E. I have been criticized a few times for taking it. The document mentioning it to me was in the form of a letter from Mr. Lloyd George, who was then Prime Minister. It mentioned nothing about the war. It was granted for services rendered to our trade union. That was why I accepted the honour; and Mr. Gee, who was also honoured at the same time, accepted for the same reason.

We didn't go to Buckingham Palace in top hats and frock coats. The Lord Chamberlain gave us instructions as to what time to attend, etc. I had a word on that occasion with the King and Queen on "nowt in particular," and after receiving the decoration at the hands of the King, walked away and had done with it. It was a very free and easy ceremony.

The next time I went to Buckingham Palace was when I was asked as an M.P. to a Royal garden party. MacDonald and one or two of us walked from the House of Commons, had a chat with folks we knew, and took a cup of tea. Whilst most folk were stylishly and smartly dressed, we were in our everyday clothes, with soft hats and lounge suits.

My daughter Norah and I went again to a tea party in the Palace in 1928.

There is nothing wrong in seeing these folks if you don't get swell-headed with it.

By the way, when the King signed the Pledge of Abstinence for the duration of the War, I happened to be Mayor, so I called a meeting to urge the same upon our townsfolk. We held a meeting in the Town Hall Square, and the Town Clerk and I signed the pledge (although I had been teetotal many years then) not to touch intoxicants during the War.

I kept the pledge to the end!

The King fell off his horse at the Front and didn't then keep it, and my old friend Mr. Craik had a lapse although he was all his time next door to being a teetotaller, but I know some men who took the pledge in our Market Place that night who have been teetotal ever since and been no worse, in fact better, for it.

When the war was over and the Russian Revolution had run part of its course, I was instrumental in getting a huge cloth order placed in the Dewsbury district.

The information was that it resulted in every payment being made, and a very tidy profit being secured for the manufacturer. The turn-over was just under £400,000 and the profit over £60,000. I was glad to help to get it, and it is a pity that the trade has been hung up until now. I tried my best to move high men to trade with Russia, but they wouldn't. I sent the following petition to the King, after trying Lloyd George as Prime Minister :—

“ To His Majesty King George.

“ May I beg of you, as one who has visited the textile areas and some of the mills in Dewsbury, Batley, Bradford,

Leeds, Huddersfield and Colne Valley two years ago, to help us in the agitation for resumption of trading relations with Russia and other countries, so that our business men can do trade, and our workpeople produce cloth for the countries now in need of our products?

"There are thousands of our expert textile operatives completely unemployed, and tens of thousands working from one to three days per week only. There is a domestic tragedy in tens of thousands of our Yorkshire homes. It is certain that if the country resumed trading relations and made peace with Soviet Russia, that many of those now unemployed and many of those on short time could be in work and their homes saved, their manhood and womanhood sustained, and the conditions of the people made better.

"For God's sake urge your Ministers of State to tackle this problem at once. It is imperative, if danger is to be averted, that the unemployment benefit during this present trade collapse should apply to everyone, and that those who have been unemployed for the past few weeks' time should be permitted to make a claim (and have it met) for unemployment pay from the exchanges. Stop the military expeditions that are helping to ruin our country and shake our financial stability. Use some of our national resources to save our men, our women, and our children.

"Christmas is with us in a few days time, and every agency should be used to see that every home has its income, and that there may be a chance of breathing the old message of 'Peace and goodwill towards all.' The crisis is great, the need is urgent; there is no time for delay. Starvation is with us—hunger runs riot in our country. Anger comes from despair. Help to make the life of our people secure."

The following reply, dated from Buckingham Palace, was received yesterday :—

"The Private Secretary is commanded by the King to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Ben Turner's letter, and to inform him that it has been transmitted to the Prime Minister."

I never had anything nasty to say or think about our Royal Family. I am cold on the question of Royalty or otherwise. There is too much cost,

too much waste, too much lah-de-dahing about, and too many parasites knocking around a court to be just or pleasant ; but as regards the men who have been kings in my time certainly I haven't a word of objection to raise.

When King Edward "passed by," our County Council with others passed its resolution of sympathy, and our Labour group on that body put me up to speak on their behalf ; and I observed "that they looked on King Edward not only as King of Great Britain and Ireland and Emperor of India, but as an International King, making international peace his greatest interest. Even when the German war scare was in progress King Edward held out the hand of peace and brotherhood, and prevented the nation from being embroiled in a horrible disaster. Therefore working men, who were always in favour of peace, were glad to recognize the fact that during the whole nine years of his reign King Edward's chief devotion to the national interests took the shape of promoting international peace, and Socialists, Labour men, Radicals, and all politicians could associate themselves quite fully with that vote of sympathy. Their sympathy would go out to the Queen-Mother, whose pathetic message had struck a chord in all their hearts that morning, to the new King and the rest of the Royal Family, just as it was when death parted them from loved ones in their own homes."



## CHAPTER XXIV

### WOMEN'S FRANCHISE

THE franchise for women of twenty-one and upwards has at last been granted. It has been a long, long fight. John Stuart Mill, Mary Wolstencroft, and other pre- and mid-Victorians urged the reform near one hundred years ago. The old Chartists were in favour of adult suffrage. The old Trades Union Congress urged it in the 'seventies, and in the 'eighties my wife and I both signed petitions in favour of women having the vote on the same terms as men. Our own union had its petition for the same in 1885 and our little banner in the Franchise Procession in 1884 asked for equal franchise for all. In the late 'seventies the Weavers' Union in Dewsbury and Morley had a sub-committee of women claiming the vote, and in my home is an old newspaper photo of six of our union women who were a Women's Suffrage Sub-Committee.

I never wavered in my faith that women were entitled to the vote, and at Congresses, on behalf of our union, we had a stock resolution urging Parliament to give the vote to women on the same terms as to men. This was long before the militant section of the Suffrage Movement came along. When it did so I was in full sympathy with the movement, but without violence to other folks. The militants were sacrificing themselves—not

other folks. It was my privilege to be in close harness with many of the militants in the movement.

One of the best little persons I knew in the movement has never been recognized as fully as she should have been, namely, Mary Gawthorpe, now in America. Another was Adela Pankhurst, whose activities were overshadowed by those of her mother—a great woman, wife and mother, and her intellectual sister, Christabel. Adela is now married to one of the leading officials of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union in Australia.

The two biggest folks of the movement, to my mind, were Mrs. Pethick Lawrence and George Lansbury. Of the Parliamentary pioneers, of course, Hardie is entitled to first place.

My wife was in part of the militant movement. I remember her being one of a big deputation in a London march to the House of Commons. She was knocked down in a crush as they marched from Caxton Hall to the House. I had watched the police—hefty men—pushing the paraders on, but when she fell I naturally went and picked her up and got her into a cab and sent her to the hotel. She was shaken and slightly bruised, but not fit for further attacks. I had promised to look after some other middle-aged women from Yorkshire, and one of them got locked up with the rest. Mr. Pethick Lawrence bailed any out who needed, but my Dewsbury woman stayed in the cells all night. I was at the Police Court in the morning, and as she was in the list of fined or fourteen days, I made my way to her and asked her if she would go to prison or whether I should pay the fine for her. After a long chat I paid the fine and took her home. Mrs. Pankhurst was quite

cross because everybody did not go to prison, but I was afterwards glad I paid the fine, for she was at that dangerous age for women, and her health became worse later on.

We had numerous demonstrations in Yorkshire, for Women's Suffrage, and many of the leaders stayed at our house, where every one of us were ardent supporters of the cause. My wife and daughters went to the historic Hyde Park Demonstration. They marched in procession from King's Cross after travelling two hundred miles to get to London. Two of my daughters were at the two days' conference of the Women's Suffrage Movement during those hectic days, and they are now all voters. Their thanks are not due to Tories or Liberals, but to the pioneer fighters of the years gone by, and our union has been helping in that work for over forty-five years, to my own personal knowledge.

When the militant suffragists came to Batley they got thrown out of the public hall just for interjecting observations. Young Liberals and young Tories delighted in pushing them about. About ten of the folks finished up in the Market Place with a great meeting in sympathy with them and then dined at our house and slept as best they could on the floors and couches and the beds we had.

## CHAPTER XXV

### LOBBYING

I HAVE done a good share of Parliamentary lobbying during the past thirty-five years. When the late Lord James was Sir Henry James, Mr. Gee and I bothered him about Factory Act reforms. He was very helpful, and gave the Woollen and Cotton Trades Unions considerable help in the Particulars Clause.

When the particulars clause was first introduced into the Factory Acts it only applied to weavers. The Cotton Weavers' Union wanted their section their way, and we wanted particulars of work and wages, both on the tickets and hung up on a card or scale in the weaving shed.

On this and the proposed Act I did a good bit of lobbying, especially with the members of the Grand Committee of the House of Commons, to whom the Bill had been referred. In conversation I had to show them that in the weaving places of Yorkshire women were being defrauded of as much as one-third of their earnings. Warps were paid for as 60 yards long; yet pieces were turned out from such warps 70 yards long. This, of course, was a physical impossibility, and proved that fraud was practised on the weavers. I instanced cases where the picks per inch paid for would be forty or fifty and the tuners had instructions to

put in four, eight, or more picks than stated, and the exactions in some mills would have been a discredit to Dick Turpin.

We lobbied many weeks in succession, and achieved our object. Since then the Particulars Clauses have been made to apply to piece workers in many sections of the industry, and to many other industries as well.

There were a few firms in the Heavy Woollen District who tricked their weavers even after the law was established, and one firm in particular took a bit of "catching." Mr. Rowland Tinker, a former Huddersfield tuner, who later became a journalist on the staff of *England*, and later still ■ factory inspector at Moses Gate, Bolton, happened to be an old friend of mine. He knew the firm in question and the Home Office allowed him to co-operate with another factory inspector. One day they pounced upon the firm in question. They measured piece lengths, counted picks and examined tickets, and had done part of it before the head of the firm was aware they were there. He was summoned and heavily fined for his wrongdoing, but he had taken hundreds of pounds from weavers in this way.

I remember the same firm being summoned in 1893 for breaking the Factory Acts, the employer having allowed women to work overtime. He knew the law, but he came down to our house one noon in a rage and planted a revolver down on the mantelshelf (our room was my office as well) and went into lamentations about the inspectors always being on his track. I said to him: "Start doing right, and they'll leave you alone." He threatened he would shoot himself. Ultimately he wanted me to go to the Home Office and get the summons

withdrawn. Of course, I told him it couldn't be done.

Another time the same manufacturer was in trouble with the Corporation. It was not doing right to him over the water supply at his mill and he came to see me about it. My mother, who lived with us for twenty years, saw the carriage come up the street and stop at our door. I let him in, and learnt afterwards that she stood in the lobby all the time the interview was going on, for she hadn't forgotten the revolver he had brought on his previous visit. He became more law-abiding in supplying particulars to the weavers, but his oddities cost him a fortune, and he failed.

When the Particulars Clauses were established, Mr. T. Birtwistle, the Lancashire weavers' secretary, was made Chief Particulars Clause Inspector. It was a proper appointment. When an assistant was about to be appointed he came to see me about it and he also sent for me over to his house one Sunday, at Accrington, and we talked over the wages that should be paid. The Home Office thought £2 a week was enough. I demurred, and said it should be not less than £150 a year with a rising scale. Finally it was fixed up at that starting figure. I am glad I didn't go into the work. First of all it wouldn't have suited me; secondly, I don't think I could have done it; and thirdly I have had a more suitable, if a more exciting life. True, I should have been entitled to a pension now, and I might have saved money from it, but I do not regret not trying it, and a good man got it at the commencing salary mentioned above.

The next bit of lobbying in connection with the Factory and Workshop Act was when the twelve o'clock stop was secured for textile mills. As a lad

I know folks worked until 2 p.m., and in my own working days 1 p.m. on Saturdays, so we went in for a Saturday noon stop, and got it. The Factory Act hours were dropped from 56½ to 55½, but it took a lot of squeezing.

Mr. Gee and I did a good deal of lobbying Yorkshire members, and others, before it was won. I urged that it would give folk time to get from the mill, wash and dress, go to market towns with market tickets, go to concerts and socials, go to sporting matches, and even go on half-day trips. (There were half-day trips then.)

The other part we lobbied upon was that there should be a compulsory half-hour for cleaning purposes. I have seen many an accident in mills owing to cleaning with the machinery running. We got the law made that a mill engine should stop half-an-hour before the proper time on Saturdays, to allow cleaning of machinery, and it has saved many a limb.

In the 'nineties the Trades Union Congress had a system of sending huge deputations to the various Ministers of State. The "Congress" would pass numerous resolutions and then it would arrange with Ministers of State to receive deputations on various topics.

Sometimes the deputations would cover a two-days' tour. The Parliamentary Committee would call about 200 of us together at the Westminster Palace Hotel, and the speakers would be chosen to put the case for the subjects concerned. Then the whole 200 or more of us would crowd into the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the old L.G.B. Office, the War Office, or the department necessary for our case.

When the bomb outrage occurred outside St.

Stephen's Hall, many years ago, and the scare was on, the Detective Service used to examine the bags of anyone who entered the House or who visited any of the Ministries. That year we had been to the Foreign Office and the Home Office and were to meet some Minister at the House of Commons. An old Lancashire weaver friend of mine, whose bag contained a clean collar, a handkerchief, some tobacco, and shaving tackle, had his bag looked into at both places, and when he entered St. Stephen's outer lobby he was asked to open it again. He got angry and shouted "Take t' b—— bag."

In the late 'nineties, there was established a committee, including dukes and weavers, to discuss food supplies in times of peace and war. The late Harry Quelch, the late Duke of Sutherland, myself and others were members of this committee. We met sometimes at the House of Commons, once at a famous lunch room, but we ultimately disagreed, as we wanted Land Nationalisation and some of the dukes wanted Protection.

I think I have done as much lobbying and visiting the House of Commons as most men since 1889, so much so that I used to be termed by colleagues, "A Member of the Smoke Room."

We lobby ministers of state yet on resolutions passed by our Trades Union Congress, and I think I have been on most of them this past ten years. We do not, however, go in big numbers now. If a Union has secured the passage of a resolution by Congress, and it needs a visit to a Minister or to the Prime Minister, one of the sub-committees goes, and included in the deputation are representatives of the Unions whose resolution Congress has accepted. Generally about five and the chairman go



from the committee and another three or four make up the number. It's better this way, although it might not be as spectacular as in the old days. If it comes to a deputation to the Prime Minister on big general issues, all the General Council of the T.U.C. may be the deputation. In this way we have both seen the Prime Minister at Downing-street and in his room in the House of Commons.

Old Campbell Bannerman was one of the kindest sort. Then I would place Bonar Law next. Baldwin is all right—easy going and plain—and, of course, MacDonald was seen in his days, but we knew largely what to do and expect, in so far that he is and was in the inner Councils of the Trades Union and Labour Movement. Lloyd George was very human, but I must confess we seldom expected to get a plain "yes" or "no" such as Bonar Law would give. He was generally happy in his phrasing, but sometimes there was doubt expressed as to his real meaning after we had left Lloyd George. Mr. Asquith was a very astute man, but his "yea" was his "yea." I never was on a deputation when Gladstone was Prime Minister, but I do remember helping to present a petition on Bimetallism to the late Lord Salisbury when he was in charge of the State.

Of course, nowadays we always have folks in the House of Commons who can help us with questions and in debates, etc. Formerly our men were few, and the late Sir Charles Dilke was really the pilot of many Trades Union things like Trade Boards Legislation and points about Factory Acts and Factory inspection. It is better to have our own folks in the House of Commons, but it is strange that in the time of writing the Textile Trades have only one Member of Parliament,

namely, Tom Shaw, M.P. for Preston. There have been more, but Tout and Bell and Law and I were knocked out years ago. Some will get back this next election, but who and where I don't know, but I feel sure of it. It is better to be able to speak from the floor to Ministers of State than to wait on the mat, and then, cap in hand, ask for the things we want.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES : GIVING EVIDENCE ON FINES, ETC.

ON several occasions I have been called upon to give evidence before Royal Commissions and Select or Departmental Committees, appointed by the Government.

The first was before the Labour Commission in 1895. Amongst the Labour members of the Commission were James Maudsley, the cotton operatives' chief leader ; Tom Mann, who was then much in the limelight as a trade union spokesman ; W. Abraham, the Welsh Miners' leader, better known as " Mabon," and even better known in the trade union world as a singer than a speaker ; John Burnett, Mr. Geoffrey Drage, the well-known publicist, was secretary.

Our Union was asked to give evidence, and Messrs. Gee, Drew, and myself, were chosen for that purpose.

Much controversy followed the evidence. Someone tried to challenge the charge of sweating in the textile trade, but did not nullify the evidence.

I have given evidence on two or three occasions relative to the half-time question. The raising of the half-time age from 10 to 11 followed a period of intense lobbying of Members of Parliament. The teachers' union asked our union to help them. We did all we could. They looked at it from the

physical and educational point of view. The age was raised to 11 and the National Union of Teachers sent me their hearty thanks for services rendered. When it was raised from 11 to 12 I helped again and won their thanks a second time.

During the war, the last and final committee, sitting on the question of raising the age for work for children, met, and again I gave evidence, and urged the abolition of half-time labour. I am thankful it has gone.

Two Select Committees sat during the past thirty years upon the subject of fines and deductions in factories, and I gave evidence against such inflictions and asked for an amendment of the law to prohibit them.

The late Charles Bradlaugh was a prime mover in promoting amendments to the Truck Act. So was the late Sir Charles Dilke, and the latter statesman drafted a bill for our union to promote. I have the draft in his own handwriting in my possession to-day.

Mr. Bradlaugh's Truck Act amendments dealt with paying wages in "pubs," etc. I have seen spinners and others who worked on the "tack" system, pay their undermen out at public-houses. It often led to drinking and wasting money. These reforms came slowly, but surely. Mr. Bradlaugh's big legislative work in his short time in Parliament was the Truck Act.

I knew Mr. Bradlaugh a little and was several times in his company when he came to lecture at Huddersfield or surrounding areas. I met him at a great Radical demonstration in Mr. Eccles' grounds at Kirkburton in the early 'eighties.

Mr. Gee and I also had a special interview with Mr. Bradlaugh at Thornton's Temperance Hotel,

Huddersfield, on behalf of our union. It would be in 1887. A firm's weavers were on strike, and in the usual way we sent to the local newspaper the customary advert: "Wanted, all weavers to keep away from \_\_\_\_\_'s mill." The newspaper refused to accept the advert, telling us that it was illegal.

We asked Mr. Bradlaugh, who knew more law than most men, to advise us, and he proved to us that by recent judgment the editor was correct, and drafted us a legal form of advertisement, which we always used afterwards, viz., "Wanted all people to know that there is a dispute on at \_\_\_\_\_'s mill." He would take no payment for his advice.

Returning to the fines subject, there were and there are some strange notions about fining in some owners' and managers' heads. Of course, I am a textile worker—a weaver by trade or profession—and I have the notion that the faults of all processes preceding weaving show in the cloth, and in my evidence I showed that faulty yarn can be due to bad spinning, poor mules, irregular running of the engine, poor cards on the scribbling machines, poor mixing in the "willeyhole," bad buying of raw material, cheap buying of raw material, bad calculations of the experts in the designing room, and other causes. I therefore held that weavers should not be blamed for everybody's sins. True weavers do make mistakes. Who doesn't?

The timing-in system is a product of the past forty years. It grew out of slackness on the part of a few workers and keenness on the part of employers. It has now become a system.

They introduced timing-in at one place at which I worked as a weaver, and I didn't like it. I was

a piece-worker, and we often had to remain idle for weft, for shuttles, for tuners, for warps, for bits passing, etc., etc. I didn't go late to my work. When checking-in was started I did not go through the doorway, but around it. That way was then closed up. I tried going in at a side door, which was not often used. That was then locked up, and one of the foremen kindly warned me it was useless to resist the system. I argued with him, and whilst he agreed with me, he advised acceptance of the rule. I didn't do it just then. I found a way to escape and get into the mill over a wall by the side of the mill and by a back door into the shed. That was then closed up, and I was driven to check in.

Of course, some would say I am antediluvian in my notions, but I want more simplicity and more gentleness and less rush and push in mill-life, and with it would be greater perfection.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### GENERAL STRIKE

THE biggest of all strikes in which I have taken part was the General Strike of 1926. During my time I have heard the idea of a general strike talked about, read much about it, but the French or Continental notion was a down tools policy for a day. I believe Tom Mann, in one of his pamphlets or his writings, mentions "one day" as about the limit of a general strike for some great purpose or another. It has been talked about as a demonstration against war or some other big crime or injustice. Candidly, I never expected to be in at a great strike lasting nine days, and I never want to see another.

It came along out of a great injustice to the hardest body of working men in the kingdom.

The Government was responsible for policy of procrastination and delay during the period preceding the great stoppage. The crisis in the coal industry had been developing for years. The four great inquiries into the industry, viz. : The Sankey Commission of 1919 ; The Buckmaster Inquiry of 1924 ; The MacMillan Inquiry of 1925 ; and lastly the Samuel Commission of 1926 ; had clearly elicited the facts—the more important of which were :—

First—The Buckmaster Report (April 15th, 1924) found that the miners were badly paid, practically every class of

day worker in terms of real wages being worse off than in 1914.

Second—The Sankey Commission had found that the miners were not responsible for the condition of the industry, but that a drastic re-organization of the coal industry was essential. In the Commission's own words "The present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned."

In spite of this, Mr. Baldwin appointed a New Coal Commission which wasted six months in a futile inquiry into facts which were already known to everybody with an interest in the problem.

The Samuel Commission reported early in March, 1926. Then followed seven weeks of negotiations in which not a single proposal was put before the miners dealing with the fundamental issue of re-organising the industry. The proposals put before the workers were a demand by the owners for a district settlement and lower wages. Meanwhile the sands were running out, but Mr. Baldwin's contribution to industrial peace was a one-sided and fabulous insistence that the miners should agree to accept wage reductions as a preliminary to further negotiations!

The owners' notices expired on May 1st, 1926, and finally on April 30th the Government conveyed to the miners the coalowners' definite proposals. These proposals had taken from April 13th to April 30th to prepare but the miners were given between 1.15 p.m. and 12 midnight to reply.

The miners were faced with a mass attack upon their wages and working conditions. They tried their hardest, if not their best, to get the Government to do the right thing, and put into operation the reports of previous commissions and committees. The Government were adamant. They acted as stupid strike-breakers for the coalowners.



The General Council of the Trades Union Congress tried their best to preserve peace in the coal industry. They met the Government and other responsible people, but in vain.

During that memorable week before the strike was declared they called into consultation the Executives of the chief trades unions in the kingdom. The strike was not lightly entered into. It was not premeditated or prepared for in the broadest sense of the term. True, we had to get some machinery established once it came. The conferences were held in the Memorial Hall on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and circulars, leaflets and manifestoes were drawn up ready for any speedy eventuality. I was concerned with one section that drew up the document dealing with public safety, and think the document dealing with proposals for co-ordinated action during the General Strike, if it took place—as it did—was really skilfully drawn up. That is not said because I had a part in it, but because it followed out carefully-drawn instructions for public well-being and safety.

The following is part of the draft :—

#### TRADES AND UNDERTAKINGS TO CEASE WORK.

Except as hereinafter provided, the following trades and undertakings shall cease work as and when required by the General Council :—

*Transport*, including all affiliated unions connected with Transport, i.e., railways, sea transport, docks, wharves, harbours, canals, road transport, railways repair shops and contractors for railways, and all unions connected with the maintenance of, or equipment, manufacturing, repairs, and groundsmen employed in connection with air transport.

*Printing Trades*, including the Press.

## PRODUCTIVE INDUSTRIES.

(a) *Iron and Steel.*

(b) *Metal and Heavy Chemicals Group.*—Including all metal workers and other workers who are engaged, or may be engaged in installing alternative plant to take the place of coal.

*Building Trade.*—All workers engaged on building, except such as are employed definitely on housing and hospital work, together with all workers engaged in the supply of equipment to the building industry, shall cease work.

*Electricity and Gas.*—The General Council recommend that the Trade Unions connected with the supply of electricity and gas shall co-operate with the object of ceasing to supply power. The Council request that the Executives of the Trade Unions concerned shall meet at once with a view to formulating common policy.

*Sanitary Services.*—The General Council direct that sanitary services be continued.

*Health and Food Services.*—The General Council recommend that there should be no interference in regard to these, and that the Trade Unions concerned should do everything in their power to organize the distribution of milk and food to the whole of the population.

With regard to hospitals, clinics, convalescent homes, sanatoria, infant welfare centres, maternity homes, schools, the General Council direct that affiliated Unions take every opportunity to ensure that food, milk, medical and surgical supplies shall be efficiently provided.

## TRADE UNION DISCIPLINE.

(a) The General Council direct that, in the event of Trade Unionists being called upon to cease work, the Trade Unions concerned shall take steps to keep a daily register to account for every one of their members. It should be made known that any workers called upon to cease work should not leave their own district, and by following another occupation, or the same occupation in another district, blackleg their fellow workers.

(b) The General Council recommend that the actual calling out of the workers should be left to the Unions, and instructions should only be issued by the accredited representatives of the unions participating in the dispute.

It will be seen that food, milk, medical and surgical supplies were to be continued.

Clause 4, which I urged very strongly, was as follows :

" A strong warning must be issued to all localities that any person found inciting the workers to attack property, or inciting the workers to riot, must be dealt with immediately. It should be pointed out that the opponents will in all probability employ persons to act as spies and others to use violent language in order to incite the workers to disorder."

This was based upon the knowledge that in previous years governments had incited to riot, that agents provocateurs had been sent round and would be again, and as I am still a firm believer in " non-violence," in every particular, and especially in trade troubles and foreign relationships, perhaps my readers will see why I stressed this clause so strongly.

We did not let this go out at all until the final decision was taken on that fateful Saturday afternoon. During those three days and nights the special sub-committee of the Trades Union Congress was at it night and day to find a formula that would get the Miners' Federation, the Government and the mine-owners into contact with each other. During those interviews there were interludes when the assembled delegates had nothing to do but wait and wait. Some of us on the General Council were sent up at varying waiting times to speak to the delegates and to enliven the " waits " ; community singing, and reciting, filled in many a gap. Each report that came from our Negotiating Sub-Committee was given to the delegates, and any time, if a strong lead had been given, the delegates would have declared the

General Strike on. There was great restraint shown by all our leaders, and it was only at the last gasp, on the Saturday afternoon, that it was decided the strike should take place at midnight the following Monday. Even then the Sub-Committee of the Congress General Council were told to hang on and see if they could get the Government to show reason and fair play.

It is well known that the dispute was nearly avoided on the Sunday night, when our people had met Mr. Baldwin and the Cabinet at Downing Street, and were having under consideration a new form of words that would have overcome the difficulty. Then came the refusal of the printers at the *Daily Mail* offices to print an article—a maddening article—against the miners and the Trades Union Movement. This gave Churchill and other warriors of the Cabinet a chance to become tricky, and when our sub-committee went back expecting to meet the Cabinet Sub-Committee with their new wording, they were told that the Cabinet had broken up and that some of them had gone to bed. It was an aggravating position, and this break impelled the General Strike to take place and negotiations to be ended. I believed then and I believe now that Churchill and Co. wanted a fight and had something to do with creating this Sunday midnight episode.

From that Monday, Eccleston Square became the headquarters of the Strike Committee. We were in constant session. Sub-committees were created, and our meetings lasted each day into the next day, for we never wanted to miss a chance of doing what could be done to ease the national situation and to get a decent settlement for the miners. My job was being a member of the

Strike Committee. We were in constant session, interviewing this person and that group of persons, granting permits for this or that to be done. It was no light task. There were some awkward corners to negotiate, but I never served on a more amiable committee in my life. There were reports from districts to consider, advice to be sent by scouts, messengers and others to various parts of the realm, and as we knew our messages were tapped, and the telegrams read, there was a network of despatch riders created.

There has been considerable controversy created since the dispute over a statement made by the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas, M.P., at Blackpool, anent an alleged permit asked for by the Furnishing Trades Association. Mr. Gossip has published a pamphlet, declaring that his union did not ask for a permit, and I am quite certain that neither he nor his union did so. That is my opinion, and I was on the special Committee meeting in the Labour Party Board Room that had this question of permits for buildings in Hyde Park to deal with.

During that week, Sir Herbert Samuel and others were in active association with our sub-committee and brought out proposals that it was felt might be the groundwork of a settlement, and at the week-end, they continued their talks, finding words and phrases and clauses that might lead to a settlement.

At the week-end, a number of us were detailed off to address meetings in various parts of the provinces. We had to go by road, and it was my first and last ride in a Rolls Royce car going as far as Doncaster, on the Friday. I addressed meetings in various parts of Yorkshire on the Saturday and Sunday, and on the Monday a number of us were

called in to speak to a big meeting at Doncaster on our way back by road to London. On our way home on the Friday the roads were nearly empty of transport. On our way back on the Monday, the nearer we got to London the more one became convinced that it would be well if we could find a means to end the dispute.

When I arrived with my colleagues at Eccleston Square, the General Council were meeting the Miners' Federation, and jointly considering the Samuel Report. It was far into the morning when we broke up, but I felt sure we were nearing the end. On the Tuesday we were in session all day, but somehow or other tempers were getting a bit frayed, and there were reports of the strike breaking down in the South and East and in parts of London. That day the General Council sent a few of us to interview the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace. It was my first visit there, and my first chance to meet Dr. Davidson. My impression was that he was a good cleric, but a keen business man. His sympathies, I think, were with the miners, but he had the Church to maintain, and was not as free to say all he felt. I may be doing him an injustice. I don't know, but we were thankful when he promised to broadcast his views that evening. He was somewhat sore at the Government's action in sabotaging his observations a few days before.

When we reported back to the General Council they were satisfied we had done our best, but the discussion then centred round not should we end the General Strike, but at what hour. It was decided that a final appeal should be made to the Miners' Federation to accept the Samuel Report, and to go with us jointly to Downing Street to

declare the Strike at an end. Five of us were deputed to meet the Federation E.C. at Russell Square in the forenoon and try and get them with us. We urged, we pleaded, but there were some who wouldn't, and our mission was in vain. It was now getting on towards noon, the time fixed by the General Council for us all to be at Downing Street to meet the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Making our way there we met our colleagues and reported on our failure. I felt disgusted at Downing Street that noon-time. Everybody understood that the Cabinet knew what our mission was about. Everybody was led to believe that the Prime Minister and his colleagues would be big men and that the Strike would be ended with all people going back to their work, but our first greeting was from some "under man" wanting to know what our mission was. It wouldn't have taken much to get us all to leave the place and let the Strike go on a bit longer, but we didn't, and after a while we met the Cabinet. There were some of the Cabinet in great glee. They showed it on their faces and in their demeanour, and I felt then they were in the aggregate a poor lot of rulers. This does not apply to them all, but either the telephones had lied or the *pour-parlers* had missed fire, for the bargains arrived at with our people and some Cabinet authority were not kept.

The Strike was not at the end of its tether. Another million men could have been got out the day following, but our General Council were bigger men than the Cabinet, and carried out their understanding and ended the dispute at 12 noon. It was somewhat humiliating to go outside into Downing Street and buy newspapers and see

contents bills that must have been printed ere we had made our decision known. It was a hectic time. Our own *Daily Herald* was closed down, like the other newspapers, but we had to have a news sheet of some sort, and the *Daily Herald* staffs agreed to run us a newspaper, the *British Worker*. It was a marvellous production, and it brought forth the Government's paper, the *British Gazette*. Their paper cost the State much money ; our paper made a profit of several thousands of pounds.

During the running of the *British Worker* news came one evening by 'phone that the police had invaded the *Herald* premises, and as Chairman it seemed to be my business to go down and see about it. When I got there the streets surrounding the premises were lined with policemen, and I was at first prevented going across to the premises, but in a short time I got an inspector to meet me, and after a courteous talk, was permitted to enter our own premises. There were policemen in every room. I got upstairs in the manager's room with the sub-editors and others, and was informed by the police authorities that no one could leave and no printing could take place until they got fresh instructions. A copy of the *Worker* had been taken up to some legal luminary, to see if it was seditious or something, and we were held up. Outside the increasing crowd kept peaceful and orderly, singing Labour hymns and Socialist songs. After a long wait the word came from the police authorities that the paper was all right, and it was printed. London newsagents had waited hours for it, but news travels fast, and although our despatch riders could not take their usual parcels into the country, our sales in



London were as big as our machines could print.

There were many after-effects of the Strike. The railway companies did not seem willing to honour the Baldwin appeal, but after Thomas, Walkden and others had put forth herculean efforts, the railways restarted, and travel again became possible. It was at least another week before industry really got going, and even then the miners' dispute continued with unabated vigour.

The Miners' Dispute lasted right until the edge of Christmas. Again the General Council tried to ease up a settlement, and appointed me on to a small sub-committee to carry on talks with Downing Street. We had meetings in Churchill's room and in the Cabinet room, but the atmosphere was too chilly to be comfortable.

The Miners' Federation E.C. were divided. Herbert Smith, Tom Richards and others were big and sensible, but one or two did not do the Federation any useful service, and have helped to damage one of the finest Labour Federations in the world.

The dispute ended in defeat, ended with lower wages, and a longer working day, and I firmly believe that had the Federation taken the advice of the General Council in May and of a few of their own leaders, the evil legislation would have been avoided and the six months' tragedy minimized.

The Mineowners' Association, to my mind, were not good. They had the Government's backing, but it is so easy to be wise after the event that I cast no blame on Smith and most of his colleagues for the aftermath of the General Strike.

When the Strike was over, the troubles did not end. Our own union members in the Textile

Trade were not called out by the General Council or by ourselves as officers, but in Lancashire and Bradford we had men who left work on the general signal being given, despite the general instructions given by the General Council that as desired sections would receive instructions when and if they had to cease work. It was no good, for I never knew men so anxious and willing to strike for the sake of the miners. It was positively great to see men in the mass willing to make sacrifices for the good of others. However, our union was asked by a big employers' association in Lancashire to meet them on the subject of their employees (our members) having ceased work illegally. My colleague and I met them and we had to declare they had struck illegally. I remember one gentlemanly employer putting the point to me as to whether there would be another general strike, etc. My reply was that if war was called by any government in our land, they (the workpeople) would be justified in having another general strike. That, I think, is the only time I would even encourage another, and even that event could be avoided by sensible votes at the ballot box.

Another big syndicate of employers also took our union to the High Court in London, but our K.C. was instructed to settle the case, and the judgment was given that our men had acted illegally. They had. Their moral passion was greater than their regard for legality.

The dispute is so recent, and the incidents so well known, that I need not enlarge further on the Great Strike of three million people in support of a million miners. It was an epoch-making period. I quote from a local newspaper the words

I spoke in Batley Market Place on the Sunday following the end of the General Strike :—

" The story of the week's negotiations can never be fully told, but those who talk about a complete surrender lie. Many who spoke it knew better. During last week-end the Trades Union Negotiation Committee met Sir Herbert Samuel at his house after some informal suggestions had been made to meet him as Chairman of the recent Coal Commission. As stated last Sunday at the meeting he addressed, the workers' representatives never miss a chance to negotiate. They had done so during the ten days before the miners' lock-out occurred, and every day since it had occurred. They seized this unofficial invitation, and met Sir Herbert, along with three representatives of the miners. At this meeting some sort of scheme for dealing with the miners' problem was discussed. A further meeting occurred, at which the scheme was planned out in writing. On the Monday the scheme was further developed, and it became then a question of trying to get the scheme acceptable. The T.U.C. made an unofficial bargain to try and get the scheme accepted. It was a miners' question and the miners alone could deal with it.

" We held our meetings with the miners for hours far into the night of Monday and Tuesday. Re-drafts were made, words altered, and opinions expressed, and on Wednesday morning the Trades Union Congress full committee decided to accept the suggestions, which included the following : Withdrawal of the miners' lock-out notices ; a subsidy to be given for a period to allow for reconstruction under the scheme ; work to be resumed at the old rate of wages ; no reduction to occur to

lower paid men, even if the new board felt some reduction in wages was essential; and other reforms were set out in the document, and, above all, negotiations were to be opened out.

"The great strike in defence of the miners was to secure resumption of negotiations with no reductions operating during negotiations, or, in other words, to secure the withdrawal of the wage reduction and extension of hours proposal. This was guaranteed us in very explicit ways, but, alas! not in writing. The promises were behind closed doors. We accepted them in good faith. There was a gentlemanly pledge of honour floating about, and the Trades Union Congress trusted it. On these pledges and promises the Congress decided to call off the General Strike. I repeat that it was called off, all present being impressed with the promise that simultaneously with the 'call off' the lock-out notices would be withdrawn. Like men who should be brave enough to do these things, the arrangements were made to see the Prime Minister and declare it off.

"It was neither collapse nor surrender. The Strike was then at its most successful part. The Strike Committee had been keeping people from coming out on strike. They had a task to keep them in. A quarter of a million engineers, etc., were coming out the morning following, and in every sense the General Strike up to then was a great victory for the unity of the workers.

"The Press and the B.B.C. were not as extensively truthful as they should have been, the Government's organ was, to say the least of it, none too clean, and the *Daily Mail* was putrid. The provincial press is ten times cleaner than the London millionaire press, and the printers were

good judges when they refused to print some of the stuff before the lock-out had been on two days or the General Strike commenced.

"There was much commotion in the minds of two of the Free Church clergy in the district. They could be ignored. They never were on the side of the workers. The workers had struck and were called rude names. The cotton employers of Lancashire had shut down their works twenty hours a week for many a year—deliberately and by organized arrangement. They were not pilloried by the parsons or condemned by the London dailies for alleged conspiracy. They had not the Emergency Acts applied to them. They didn't fetch soldiers and sailors to send the millowners to prison. There had been deliberately organized stoppages of huge works and industries by employers in the past, and it was only when the great body of the workers, in moral support of the miners, took the great step of organizing a strike—and having a successful one—that the powers of Law and Hell were used against them.

"He claimed it as a great victory for the workers. They had shown a high moral unity. They had stood up for the oppressed miners and their wives and children. They had felt their own power and used it peaceably. They had kept before them the power of compelling negotiations without a reduction, in place of a reduction to be followed, maybe, by negotiations. He made no apology for the General Strike. It was the most peaceful, moral demonstration the world had ever seen. It was an eye-opener to all, and the brutal sentences on the few who were summoned was regrettable. His part in the London transactions may have been a humble and a slight one. He

had done his best for peace. He stood by his colleagues on the Trades Union Congress Committee. They had saved the country from a bloody revolution, and he hoped the Government would learn not to break promises, not to flout the freedom of the workers, and not to back wages reductions."

I felt impelled during the ending of the Strike to put down my recollections of the hectic twenty-one days prior to, during, and just after the nine days' wonder.

I submit it exactly as written it on scraps of paper and have kept the originals as well as the typed copy I made the Sunday after the end of the dispute. I won't say it is all correct or that my impressions were always good, but they are the facts as I felt them during the twenty-one days of trouble and trial :

"The miners were being attacked and the proposals were to extend the hours of labour to eight per day until 1929, and then to hold a commission to consider the effect of same, followed also by a 13 per cent. reduction of wages.

"The General Council of the Trades Union Congress appointed in September its Industrial Committee to deal with all big cases of Industrial disputes. They had met the Miners' Executive Committee on several occasions. They had seen the Government, along with the miners, and had not come to terms. It was decided to call a special conference of Executives of Unions and the call was put in the *Daily Herald* on Saturday, the 23rd April. Our Executive Committee was meeting, Mr. Shaw being in Geneva, attending the Economic Conference in place of Mr. Pugh of the T.U.C. Our E.C. decided to send Messrs. Battersby,

Riddiough, Lockwood, Ellis, Dawson and myself to the special conference.

"On Tuesday the General Council met at Eccleston Square. It was here decided to appoint a committee to draw up proposals for the General Council. This committee included Bevin, Purcell, Findlay, Rowan, Walker and myself. The Industrial Committee became the negotiating committee. These were Pugh, Swales, Bromley, Thomas, Tillett, Walkden, Hicks, Hayday and Citrine. The T.U.C. General Council did its ordinary work and the special conference of Executives of Unions met at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, on Thursday, the 29th April. This conference was attended by about 1,500 delegates, E.C. members, and officials of Unions. The Cotton Spinners were absent, Boothman having left the Executive Committee on Wednesday afternoon. Ogden was absent, but the Cotton Weavers' Amalgamation were present. The Cardroom people were absent, not being affiliated to the Congress. The Yorkshire Textile Unions were mostly represented, including Woolsorters, Combers, A.S.D., Overlookers, Managers and Overlookers, Wool Top and Noil Warehousemen, etc. Titterington was present on Thursday with a colleague, but was absent on Friday and Saturday, although his colleague was present. The Sub-Committee which I was on had drafted a circular which was kept in abeyance, each copy being returned to Citrine as each redraft was made.

"We arrived at the Conference and heard the statement of Pugh as to negotiations that had taken place. The conference was in a state of tension but in favour of the Miners' case, and listened to the statement from Purcell and Thomas, and then

Cook's, whose was not very good owing to the strain upon him. It was decided to adjourn until Friday, as the Negotiating Committee were in conference with the Miners and the Government. The conference was kept in constant session, awaiting reports from the Negotiating Committee. They were to come back in an hour, then later and later and later came back, just after midnight, with failure to find a settlement. In the meantime, about 1 noon on Friday, some Trade Union newspaper workers came in with a sample bill that the printers had refused to machine at Odham's, containing a clause about the O.M.S. and Emergency Orders. This caused our Sub-Committee to get ready for a General Strike in support of the Miners. This was got ready, Bevin drafting Trades, I urging peace and lighting and food and milk and hospitals, etc. This was not to be put out until every point had failed. After midnight, word came that negotiations had broken down. Trades Union Secretaries were called together, at about 1 a.m. and given the circular asking them to give definite answers on Saturday not later than 12 o'clock. Societies' names were read out and checked and all asked to meet their people and decide 'yes' or 'no' for a General Strike. The Conference adjourned at half-past one. Got a taxi in Fleet Street and to bed just after two. Met our people at 10 a.m., and decided to answer 'yes.' Taking the risk and knowing our people's views on the matter.

"General Council met at 11.30 and reviewed situation. At 12 conference resumed.

"Societies' names read out; answers yes, except one; two or three neutral; N U.R., Cramp, said yes with reservation as to finance;



Bromley's, yes ; Walkden's, yes ; Sheet Metal Workers, yes ; Printers, all yes, except Naylor's, which had to wait until Wednesday ; and Inspectors of Taxes couldn't.

" Voting 'yes' nearly unanimous.

" Decided that on Monday night and Tuesday morning, General Strike in certain scheduled industries should take place. Feeling very great in support of miners. After vote had been recorded Bevin spoke, followed by MacDonald, Smith and Bromley. Cook asked Smith to make it clear that the miners left the whole case in the General Council's hands, but that they should be in at the miners' case for settlement. Great unanimity. Conference adjourned at 2.30. General Council met at 3.30. Appointed several sub-committees. Agreed Negotiation Committee should act until General Council met on Monday, the 3rd May.

" Many departed to May Day meetings. Spoke on May Sunday, Dewsbury Market Place, with Riley. Went to London early train Monday. General Council met in afternoon. Absent : Skinner ill, Boothman, Ogden, Hill (ill), Smillie (had gone back to Scotland). Present : Pugh, Swales, Purcell, Walker, Poulton, Bowen, Walkden, Thorne, Hayday, Bondfield, Rowan, Keen, Conley, Thomas, Turner, Bromley, Hicks, Tillett, Bevin, Quaile, Citrine, Beard, Leslie, Davenport and Elvin.

" Discussed situation Negotiating Committee reported that on Saturday night and Sunday they had been meeting Cabinet Sub-Committee and Miners' E.C. all day and nearly all night with formula that would have prevented General Strike. It was a draft really of Bevin's wages board with resumption of work at no reduction or extended

hours. They reported that at midnight Sunday when they had a conference and were discussing formula, word came that the Cabinet Committee had disbanded.

"News had come through that the *Daily Mail* workpeople had struck over an article that had been set up and which paper workers would not handle. This was said to be the cause of the breakdown of negotiations. The report was unknown, in fact, there were few of the Cabinet present, but it was rumoured that by three to two the Cabinet had decided to break off negotiations, the two being Baldwin and Birkenhead, and the three being Lord Salisbury, Sir A. Steel Maitland and Neville Chamberlain. This report indicated the fight was on.

"Further parleys took place and it was unanimously decided that General Strike should begin at midnight and starting time on Tuesday morning. Separate committees were set up. Staffs of volunteers and cycle and car helpers became numerous. Strike Committee set up: Purcell, Chairman; Bevin, Secretary; Walker, Rowan, Findlay and Turner. (These were added to on Wednesday the 12th with Bromley and Tillett.) These met at 33 Eccleston Square. All staffs of Labour Party and rooms thrown at disposal. Had decided previously *Daily Herald* should stop with rest of printing trade. Heard from inside that Government had decided to bring out its own newspaper (*British Gazette*). Decided T.U.C. should bring out its *British Worker* at Victoria House Printing Works. Bowen and Poulton made responsible for it. A great venture and a busy time for the two. Fyfe, Mellor, Williams, Barrow and others working night and day on it to overcome inside and

outside difficulties. (Possible internal trouble with staffs inside.) Jealous and expensive ; not enough T.U. spirit shown by some of the staff.

" Met in session, May 4th forward. May 4th, Strike on. Despatch riders bringing news of activities. Councils of action and local committees formed all over. Reports of stoppage of newspaper factories, forges, etc., rails, docks and tramways, and a very complete stoppage in the scheduled industries. MacDonald and Henderson called into meetings. Parliamentary debates and questions numerous.

" Arranged meetings in very many parts, for the week-end. Were taken to and from our hotels each day by volunteer car. Rumours about O.M.S. Naval Ratings, Soldiers ; objections numerous. At it late and waiting until midnight for any reports from Negotiating Committee. Went home by road Friday in Trevelyan's car to Doncaster, and in Ben Riley's new car with Tom Williams driving us to Leeds, Batley and Huddersfield. Got home at 7 p.m.

" On Saturday had great meetings at Ossett. On Sunday afternoon met Bradford Committee as Textiles wanted to come out. Great outdoor meetings at Bradford on Sunday afternoon (7,000) ; crowded meeting Morley at night ; Batley, outdoor big meeting, at night also.

" Monday— George Maine called for Riley and then me and then Conley and on to Doncaster for London. Great meeting Doncaster. Stoppage in ordered industries very complete. Bradford B.D.A. Dyers out ; Huddersfield Dyers decided ditto for Thursday the 13th, owing to " black " transport. Arrived London 8.30 Monday night. Wet, tiring, cold journey. Went direct to Eccle-

ston Square. Found Miners' Executive in conference with General Council. Meeting perplexing. During Saturday and Sunday somebody had been moving. Sir H. Samuel, Chairman of Coal Commission, had been seen. Miners were presented with a scheme. This was considered by miners, who didn't like it. This had been considered by Negotiating Committee with Samuel. Had taken Smith, Cook and Richardson with them at first interview. Herbert plain and emphatic to Samuel that he didn't like him or his actions or attitude. General Council members said he was even insulting. Perhaps he had reason to be. Adjourned half-past one a.m. Tuesday morning. Met again Tuesday. Negotiating Committee saw Samuel again and got a few phrases and words altered, but scheme materially as it was. Miners returned to consider it and came back with rejection of it. They returned after some plain and unpleasant words.

"Mr. Smith complained that they had not been consulted with Samuel. Had been kept on door-mat. A very genuine complaint. Committee asked by several Council members, could Samuel deliver the goods? Replied he could. Informed that there were several letters he had helped to draft which would be released if the General Strike was declared off. Smith said it was really an ultimatum. Expressed keen disappointment. They on coming back after retirement expressed the decision that they could not accept the document and expressed regret at their treatment. Questions put to our Negotiating Committee by several of us. Could Samuel deliver the goods? It was definitely put: 'If Strike called off would lock-out notices be withdrawn and men resume work at old wages and hours?' The Negotiating

Committee said yes, that was their opinion and belief. Informed that although Baldwin would not say so, first that simultaneously this would occur with Strike being declared off at a few minutes past 12 midnight Tuesday. General Council was talking about seeing Baldwin. Some feeling expressed by some of the Negotiating Committee that miners were not helpful. Feeling acute. All nearly decided to call Strike off for 12 noon Wednesday. Prime Minister's Secretary rang up after midnight to ask if G.C. wanted to see him? How did P.M. know we wanted to see him? Strange and unexplained mystery. Who had told him? Someone must have done. Went to hotel 1.30 wearied out. Adjourned until 11.30 Wednesday. Bevin, Walker, Purcell, Findlay, Rowan and myself went to see Miners to ask them to fall in if they could. To make the gesture. They reaffirmed previous night's decision, but added thanks to Trade Unionists for valiant stand made. Met Prime Minister at noon. A hitch occurred. Waited to know first if they had come negotiating or to declare Strike off. Went into Cabinet room. Baldwin, Maitland, Birkenhead, Chamberlain, Bridgeman, Worthington Evans and another present. Baldwin asked Pugh what statement he had to make. Pugh declares strike off. Baldwin talked neatly about it but did not mention lock-out notices of Miners. Thomas followed. Bevin followed, but not as fully as expected, but in a second speech asked about the Miners. G.C. flabbergasted at nothing being settled about Miners' lock-out notices. Retired and felt dismayed. A little disagreement about press statement. Left at 1.10 disappointed and disgusted. Papers out soon about T.U.C. Surrender.

“Resumed meetings at 2.30, Eccleston Square ; everything unsettled and uncertain. Had called out Engineers for Thursday. Wired Arthur (Bradford) strike off ; had 'phoned home 8 a.m. that morning and they had told me the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Yorkshire Evening Post* had it in that G.C. were to see Baldwin. (How did this leak out ? Who had given Baldwin the tip ?) Wires sent out all over declaring Strike off.

“During Monday night spoke to Cramp at top of steps about it being desirable strike should not go on above the week out. He declared also it must not go on much longer. Tuesday, Thomas saying ditto. Our reports are weakening. 4,000 trains running, etc. Report Bristol Docks weakened, Southampton strikers weakening, etc., etc. Strike committee had reports of breaks here and there and the feeling was depressing before decision was come to. After decision had been conveyed to Baldwin, great dismay and disappointment. Adjourned at 6 that night until Thursday. Thursday meeting all day in Strike Committee, seeing deputations from Woolwich, etc. Asked Unions to get men back to work. A multitude of problems. During first week had three days' trouble with power men and electrical workers. Constant discussion as to light and power. Arranged good terms with some Labour corporations on it to keep lighting going and power for food and hospitals. A very hard task to get these Unions to agree upon a policy. Had a big task on with requests for permits. Railway men wanted to stop all permits. Dispute over circular about food, etc.

“Made a Transport Advisory Committee and an Electric Advisory Committee. Constant stream of visitors and despatch riders all the nine days.

" Thursday the 12th met at 10 a.m. Railway men not to start except upon signing a document. Later on the railway men met and decided on another strike if their terms were inflicted. Final terms arranged on Friday.

" Beard, looked upon as weak, became a vigorous man. Thomas nervy a bit at finish. Friction at times between the strong men. Tillett loquacious. Bevin twitchy, yet a great worker. Bevin went out seeing city men and getting views ; useful in this on many an occasion. Purcell cool and careful, a devil for work though Bowen and Poulton did press work well and carefully. Left Friday morning for home 8 a.m. 5.30 p.m. meeting Sunday night ; gave news. Returned Eccles-ton Square Monday 3 p.m. Council adjourned. Ordinary Council for Tuesday at 2.30 May 18th.

#### IMPRESSIONS AS TO THE FATEFUL DAYS.

" All Council unanimous. All Negotiation Committee certain that Baldwin had been seen by Samuel and that the pledge had been given Strike declared off and notices would then be withdrawn. Tricked, bamboozled, somewhere, somehow. Great feeling in country. T.U.C. in disfavour. Miners' better terms offered on Friday but not good enough. Snag in about reduced wages. Miners' conference adjourned until the 20th. Wise tactics. Railway men back at work in large numbers. Six station-masters reduced in West Riding. who came to see me Sunday night ; promised to see Walkden over it."

When the Trades congress gave its final report at a special conference called for that purpose

many months afterwards I made the following observations :—

"MR. BEN TURNER (General Council): I want to express great satisfaction with the General Strike of 1926. I think it was a great movement and a great effort, and, despite the disappointment of the calling off of the strike, it will stand out in history as one of the greatest moral efforts that the Trade Union Movement has indulged in. I am not of the opinion of my friend Cramp. I believed in the General Strike when it took place. Most of the delegates at the Memorial Hall believed in the General Strike when it was about to take place on the 1st May. I do not remember hearing either Mr. Cramp, or anybody else, make any observations against the General Strike on that occasion, and it is rather late in the day for the observation to be made now that he never believed in the General Strike.

"Neither am I going to say 'Never again.' I hope never again, but if a great moral issue arises in this kingdom where injustice is going to be done as was going to be done, or was tried to be done, to the miners, I hope a similar effort will be made by the great Trades Union Movement.

"As to the calling off of the Strike, there can be differences of opinion about that. I should have been sorry if the Strike had continued until it was a collapse and a drift back. I believe it had lasted as long as it could last effectively, and therefore it was courageous on the part of the General Council to accept the position that it did on that Tuesday. I do not want to censure the miners for their activities during the past. They have shown themselves a heroic body of men and deserved our praise and support. They have always been bonny fighters in the Trade Union world, and I do not think we, in our General Council Report, censure them in the way that that word 'censure' means, or has been implied this morning. You cannot conduct a General Strike and a seven-months' miners' lock-out without mistakes being made on every side, but the mistakes were really few compared with the odds against the Labour Movement and the Trades Union Congress. I think sometimes the mistake we have made has been that we have been hammering against each other for these past eight or nine months while the enemy has been outside our gates. It is time we changed our policy



and showed our faith in each other. Instead of making numerous statements on the platform and writing numerous articles in the newspapers against our own people we ought to express our pride in the great spirit that was shown by Herbert Smith and his colleagues and not run them down. Mistakes were made, mistakes will always be made in big movements such as that of 1926. We have got to profit by our mistakes and avoid them in the future, and if there comes a time when some evil deed is being perpetrated upon a great body of working people in this kingdom I shall be with them for a General Strike again."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### FOLKS I HAVE KNOWN

DURING my active life I have met many interesting public men and women, both at home and abroad.

Sir Charles and Lady Dilke were two with whom I was in frequent association for many years. Nearly thirty years ago I had the pleasure of bringing Sir Charles down to Yorkshire, to speak for our union, both in Huddersfield and in Batley. I remember that Mr. Gee and I travelled down on the same train—we had been on a deputation to the Home Office on some Factory Act matter. Sir Charles, of course, rode first-class. We rode third, as usual, but for at least sixty miles of the journey he came into our compartment, planted a few cigars down on the seat, and chatted away on the proposed new Truck Bill he was about to bring out. He was not a good platform man; his House of Commons style did not fit a public meeting.

Lady Dilke was charming, both on and off the platform. They were a well-matched couple. I spoke with her at Trowbridge Town Hall thirty years ago, when we were trying to organise the woollen workers of the west. She had a knack of getting good women helpers round her, and formed the Women's Trade Union League. Miss Abrahams, now Mrs. Tennant, the wife of the

dapper ex-Secretary of the War Office, was her first great find. This lady ultimately became a Labour Commissioner and the first woman factory inspector. She came down to Batley and Dewsbury to learn about shoddy fever, ragsorters' wages, etc. She stayed at our house, and many a time now old-time raggers tell me of how she climbed over bales of rags in their warehouses, seeing all she could see, and learning what she could of labour conditions among these useful women workers.

I have met many Labour politicians. I used to enjoy J. Arch, M.P., and used to chat with him in the strangers' smoke room at the House of Commons. He was a first-class story-teller. I called to see him when he lay on his bed of sickness, slowly passing away at his cottage-home at Barford in Warwickshire. He wasn't able to come downstairs, but he gave me a word of good wishes for Labour and the textile workers in Yorkshire.

I met his biographer, Lady Warwick, several times. It was her custom for a few years to come as a visitor to Trades Congresses and address meetings under the auspices of the Gas Workers' Union and the S.D.F. At one congress she seemed somewhat depressed with the meeting. I think it was Hanley, and in my homely Yorkshire way I cheered her up by saying that there was many a time when seed was sown that didn't bear fruit just then, but did later on. Lady Warwick was and is a brave woman to leave her place in society to help the Trade Union and Socialist movement.

I met Prince Kropotkin, the Great Russian refugee and exile, several times at Socialist meetings

or in socialist circles on the occasions of the very rare functions which he attended prior to his return to Russia after the revolution in 1917. When I was in Russia, we were going out to see him one Sunday, but the car we had at our disposal broke down, and thus I was deprived of that pleasure.

In 1887 I met three noted young men from Belgium. They had come over to Lancashire to investigate into the company mill system, as they had plans to start a co-op cotton mill in Ghent. These three included Anselle, the great co-operator. They went to Oldham under the auspices of the S.D.F., and as a member, and having a few days' outing in Lancashire, I got invited to meet them, along with Hunter Watts, of the old S.D.F., Adolphe Smith, the interpreter and internationalist, and George Silk, of the Oldham Cardroom Workers' Union. We dined with Watts in Manchester. I remember it well, for I had to walk to Gravel Hole, near Rochdale, after eleven at night, and when I got to the little pub I was staying at, despite closing time having gone by many an hour, the little bar was still open and a local manufacturer was drinking and carrying on. He had "D.T." or, as we used to call it, "blue uns on."

Edward Carpenter, the Socialist poet and philosopher, I met first at Miss Ford's at Adel Grange. He was in those days a frequent visitor there. I met him many a time afterwards. He is and was the visionary and seer. Alf. Mattison of Leeds always kept up his intimate friendship with Mr. Carpenter, who lived in silent retirement in his Surrey home until his death.

H. G. Wells I have met only once.

I have played billiards with the late Ben Pickard. He wasn't a first-class player, but he was a good adviser, and whilst at times short-tempered, did a big work for the mining trade.

I have smoked cigarettes with the late Tom Burt, M.P. Many a time at King's Cross Station have we chatted together in his later Parliamentary years. He was the kindest of all miners' leaders I ever met.

Charley Fenwick, the first miner to go straight from the pit-face to Parliament, was one of nature's gentlemen. His cheery "Hallo, Ben!" was always welcome to me, and we have often smoked and chatted together in his old trades congress days, and right up to the time he ceased to be a Member of Parliament.

Many times I have met James Connolly, the leader of the Irish Rebellion in Easter week, 1918. He was a personal friend of mine. He and Larkin were in harness together, but there was a big difference in style and temperament between them. Connolly laid down his life for Irish freedom, and his book on Labour in Irish history is a great book.

My friendship with Keir Hardie was a deep and abiding one. Many a time has he slept at our house, and at various gatherings during the past thirty years have we chatted on the movement and its outlook. I prize the stick he gave me at Newport when he was Chairman of the National Labour Party Annual Conference and I was his vice-chair-





man. I also prize the gift of his home-knitted long shepherd's scarf his widow sent to me in remembrance of him.

Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughters were well-known to me. I knew also her husband, the late Dr. Pankhurst. Had he lived I feel sure he would have been Labour's first Solicitor or Attorney-General.

Bernard Shaw I met the first time in 1893. Since then I have met him at Sidney Webb's and at social functions. I was glad to be a guest at his 70th birthday dinner. I have had several communications from him of recent years, some in connection with my election to Parliament and several in connection with his play, "Saint Joan." These letters are in themselves very interesting and charming and are put away as prized family possessions.

During the 1922 election I wrote him asking him to Batley to speak for me—or perhaps send me a message. I had no great hopes that he would, for I knew that arrangements were generally made for him by Labour Headquarters, but anyway there seemed no harm in trying. Almost by return there came a printed card, evidently one that he used for all such requests as mine. It conveyed the message that he had been so booked up that he could not manage it, and expressed conventional regret. At the foot of the card in his precise, neat hand-writing, was this postscript :—

"A message from me is dangerous. You have no idea how some people dislike me.—G.B.S."



Another of his earlier election communications was in the 1922 election when he wrote :—

DEAR MR. TURNER.—I am in the hands of the organisers, and they have filled my dates right up to the 15th. As you are not on the list they evidently think you are very well able to take care of yourself without my help, and I cannot pretend to disagree with them. I do not leave the London district until the 11th, and it would not have been possible to work the Batley circuit anyhow. I am sorry; for I should have been proud to stand on your platform.

Faithfully,

G. BERNARD SHAW.

When he was about to write his great masterpiece, "Saint Joan," he sent me the following delightful letter :—

DEAR BEN TURNER,

Will you just scrawl for me on the enclosed card the names of a few published stories in north country dialect, and pop it into the post. Your own preferably.

I am writing a play about Joan of Arc; and it is no use making the girl talk like Dr. Johnson: I must devise some sort of dialect for her; and as she was north country I want to found it on our north country talk. My own dialect, being Irish, is not available. I know nobody who will understand what I want as well as you.

Dont give yourself any trouble beyond writing the titles: I know how you must curse the postman.

Ever

G. BERNARD SHAW.

I accordingly sent him about fourteen Yorkshire dialect books on, to which he replied in the following :—

The 12 books have just arrived—twelve thousand thanks.

The worst of the Dialect Societies is that they are too much taken up with out-of-the-way words and pronun-

ciations : some of them think that when they have written a story in University English, and then mis-spelt it and spoiled the grammar a little, they have produced Yorkshire Dialect, or whatever other dialect they are after. But what I am after is the construction of the sentences, the music and dramatic emphasis of them. All that can be got without going outside Johnson's Dictionary ; and it will fit Joan of Arc as well as Jenny of Otley.

Have you noticed that Lady Gregory and all the later modern writers of Irish-English have given up the old phonetic spelling of the Victorian comic writers, and use conventional spelling always ?

However, don't answer until we meet some day.

G. B. S.

When I was doing a bit of writing about myself for a newspaper, I wrote asking him if I could use his letters to me but took the line of crossing a few lines out as I thought it would be proper to miss them out on account of what I thought their privacy. He readily gave his consent to me using them and wrote :—

Ayot St. Lawrence, Welwyn, Herts.

BEN TURNER,  
The Homestead,  
Batley.

3 . 3 . 28.

By all means use the letters : I shall be proud. There is no need to cut anything out. Now that I have forgotten all about St. Joan I find the sentences you have crossed quite interesting.

G. BERNARD SHAW.

Uncle Arthur as everybody in later years call Arthur Henderson has been a big factor in the development of the Labour Party. When I knew him at first he was the able Agent of the Liberal Party, I think in Bishop Auckland. When he contested the Barnard Castle division of the County in 1904, he got in by about 40 votes. It was a

great victory and personally I had a vigorous time in some of the remote parts of that wide area. As a member of the L.R.C. executive I was in at his appointment as secretary in succession to MacDonald and one can truly say of him he is a hard worker. In fact his hobby is work though he likes a game of bowls, lawn tennis, when on a half-day holiday with his parliamentary colleagues. It was a joy to see him and his two sons sit together in the 1923-4 Parliament. I hope they will again in 1929.

As Temperance propagandist, as local preacher and as political preacher and organiser, he has had a full time job, and has no peer. When he had his serious illness a few years ago and went under the surgeon's knife in Leeds the Executive asked me to call and convey their greetings and wishes for his recovery! One of the morning newspapers also asked me to write up a column about him in preparation for his possible death. I did it, but it hadn't to be used and it is now out of date, for the past few years has added to his life's story. He seems as hale and hearty as anyone. Long may he live!

My acquaintanceship with John Burns goes back to the late eighties and early nineties! What an indefatigable person he was. I sat under his chairmanship at the Trades Union Congress before he helped to pass the new rule forbidding persons being delegates to Congress who did not work at their trade or who were not full time officers of their union. This rule debarred Trades Councils from sending delegates to Congress, thus preventing overlapping or duplication of delegation.

It did more than that, for it prevented men being

elected delegates who represented nobody but themselves and who really bought their representation by paying their own expenses and dodging the spirit of representation to Congress. It also prevented good men like Broadhurst, Hardie, Shipton and Burns himself from being made delegates, for although tried and true men they were not working at their trade nor were they paid Trades Union Officials.

I remember meeting Burns the morning after the function at Buckingham Palace when he attended in court dress to take up his job in the Cabinet of 1906. I happened to be passing the Local Government Board Office—as the Ministry of Health was designated then—when I met him and after hearty greetings he invited me in to see his room and have a chat. The first thing I saw on the long table were the court dress and hat, so naturally I asked him what these accoutrements were, to which he replied, "My tools of trade." So they were, for the levee dress is one cabinet ministers have to wear in fulfilling their job!

As a platform man Burns was excellent, his epigrams and his similes were effective. He wasn't as merciful as he might have been. I honoured him for leaving the Cabinet rather than be in at making the war of 1914. The only thing I regret is that he hasn't come down on the side of Labour and helped us as he could help our movement to make it bigger and better than it is! He is not old, only seventy, with the looks and strength of a man of fifty.

The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes has given me his friendship since I first knew him in 1892 when he and other leading members of the Amalgamated

Society of Engineers were delegates to their rules revision court, which takes place every few years, and to which delegates attended from Australia, America, South Africa and other places. The 1892 meeting was held in Leeds and continued for several weeks and I used to meet him and others after the sessions were over and take part in side meetings and discussions on Labour topics.

This Leeds conference took a big step forward in the make up of the Engineers' Union and not long afterwards George became the General Secretary of the Society, a post he filled with great honour. He led the Union in their struggle for the Eight Hours' Day. They did not win it then but they have the 47 hours' week now !

When George became a Cabinet minister in the War Cabinet following Henderson's withdrawal from Lloyd George's Cabinet, he did one piece of work for which he has not been given full credit.

Being chosen one of the Peace treaty delegates from Britain he put his heart into making it possible for Nations to act together in social legislation especially affecting the working class.

This resulted in the Peace Treaty containing in Clause 13 the means and mechanism for founding under and within the League of Nations an International Labour Office !

The Preamble of that Clause 13 is like a sermon from the New Testament and is as follows :—

#### ORGANISATION OF LABOUR.

" WHEREAS the League of Nations has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if based upon social justice ;

" And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony

of the world are imperilled ; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required ; as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of freedom of association of vocational and technical education and other measures ;

"Whereas also the failure of any Nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries ;

"The HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES, moved by sentiments of justice and humanity as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world, agree to the following, i.e., *to establish the International Labour Organisation and the Permanent International Labour Office to promote these objects.*"

Being a member of the League of Nations Union Executive and also chairman of the Labour Advisory Committee of that body I speak at many meetings and seldom if ever forget to put in a word of thanks for the big work done by George in the establishment of the International Labour Organisation of which my old friend Albert Thomas, the one time Socialist colleague of Jaures, is the directing head.

It is the biggest part of the League of Nations. It gets down to fundamentals that make for war or for peace and that also makes for social progress internationally.

One of the most delightful personages is Sir Michael Sadler who, when I knew him first, was Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University. What a

scholastic face! He is shy, cultured, pleasant, poetic and gentle. I remember when he was Principal at Leeds a second gas workers' strike took place and some of the students went blacklegging. Some of our Labour men were very angry and here and there tried to stop the grants made from the County and County Borough Councils to the University. I opposed very strongly any cutting down of grant, first because the University needed the money and a number of working people's sons and daughters get there now, and thirdly, I did not think an educational institution should suffer financially because a few well-to-do men's under-educated sons had turned to "fancy work" to try to beat the workers. They were a useless, mean lot of cusses, and the Universities should not be penalised for its odd fools.

I met Dr. Sadler many times when I was Mayor and afterwards and have also been privileged to hear him lecture on his beloved Matthew Arnold. I have many times tried to love the poetry of Arnold, but I can't. When I hear Sir Michael explore it, however, it seems another book altogether. It's my lack of poetical perspicuity.

It was my great privilege to hear Jaures the French Labour leader give an address over twenty-nine years ago. I don't know what he said, but he stirred my blood and the crowd at the Bureau du Travail in Paris who listened to, and understood his language were even more enthused than I and my colleagues were. Ere my whiskers turned white and were a little more full than they are to-day, I was taken for him in one or two continental travels. I met him several times, and I remember him holding me at an arm's length and

looking at himself, declaring in his roguish manner, we were twins.

I met the elder Liebknecht several times in England, Germany, and Switzerland, and his homeliness was an attraction.

Bebel, whom I met only twice, was more alert or less solid.

I only met Rosa Luxemburg twice, once in Berlin and once in Amsterdam. I cannot liken her to anyone better than wee Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., or a person midway between her and Margaret Bondfield, M.P.

My friendships with Trade Union and Socialist leaders in many European countries have been rich, and when I meet any of them it is a pleasure to be greeted as "Comrade Ben Turner."

Harry Quelch was, as editor of *Justice*, and leader of the S.D.F. in the nineties and the early part of this century, a fearless but hard political fighter. I took the chair and spoke for him several times when he contested Dewsbury I think in 1902. He did not do much converting folks to the faith, he was so fierce and direct, yet he was without doubt one of the best exponents of Socialism in his day and generation. He was a prominent believer in a citizen army, a policy I could not agree with, and the S.D.F. were as keenly non-pacifist as Lenin was in his day.

Hyndman was a jolly yet dogmatic S.D.F. leader. To see him stroke his long beard and to hear him expound his theories was both picturesque and educative. He just missed being an orator, but as a writer there were few to surpass



him in expounding difficult points of social or political philosophy.

The late Stephen Walsh was a dear friend of mine. I did not see him after his attendance at the Trades Union Congress at Swansea, but I had a letter from him in December promising to speak for me during the spring if his health permitted. He was a very great reader. I remember one summer afternoon when Parliament was a bit dull and the sun tempted us to go for a bus ride out to Hendon, he recited for me many passages from Shakespeare and wound up with "Tam o' Shanter" and "John Gilpin's Ride to York." Shakespeare, however, was his favourite author, but he knew his bible just as well and could dabble in Plato and Confucius as well as in other philosophers and religious books. Dear little Steve, he and his wife and my good wife and I were very close friends, and when he passed by, one felt the movement as well as oneself had lost a great comrade.

J.R. and Mrs. Clynes have for over thirty years enriched my friendships. I met J.R. first at the annual conference of the Gas Workers' Union held at Plymouth in 1892. I have served in Committee with him and in conference he was a reliable man to stem a storm or to put in graceful phrases and logical language points of view that converted the unruly and convinced the sceptic.

To know Clynes at his best is to be with him in company having his one pipe of tobacco and his one drink before bedtime. He is the fondest friend Lancashire has turned out of the Trade Union movement into the front rank of politics, and he

and his wife are as chummy to-day as when I knew them shortly after their marriage.

The most able married couple in the Labour movement are, I think, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb. As Beatrice Potter, daughter of the M.P. for Rochdale, I remember meeting her when she was preparing her matter for her history of Co-operation. I did not know Mr. Webb until they were married but I think they, Bernard Shaw, and a few more gave us the Fabian Society when it counted for far more than it does to-day. They are an ideal couple and I don't know a better pair for deep research work and for a universal knowledge.

I sat with Mr. Webb on the Labour Party Executive, and if a difficult resolution had to be drafted his hand was often the hand that did the drafting to fit the occasion, and he was certainly broadminded enough to help in these matters even if he disagreed with the policy of the resolution. He is, and I think they are, encyclopædic in their knowledge. I have been privileged to be at lunches and "at homes" at their place when one would meet men and women of great distinction. They have made many men and women for the Labour and Socialist cause by their unselfishness and devotion.

Bob Smillie has been my bosom Trades Union and Parliamentary friend. He was Chairman when I was Treasurer of the Special King's Federation Scheme Conference at Manchester, thirty years ago. In peace movements we acted together. He was Chairman of the Workers' War Emergency Committee during the war, and it was my privilege to back him up at many a meeting. I remember at a meeting in the Black Country, we were at a

peace meeting and as the lesser light, I went on first, and giving a quotation, I only quoted half the French Conscript verse:—

“ If I were King of France,  
Or, what's better—Pope of Rome,  
There'd be no fighting men abroad  
Nor weeping maids at home.”

I stopped then but he chimed in the completion and said :—

“ All the world should be at Peace,  
Or, if Kings would show their might,  
Let those who make the quarrels  
Be the only ones to fight.”

We had a delightful trip to Rome and back one time when he, lovable Harry Gosling and I “chummed” it for about eight days, played cards, recited poems, told of life's incidents, reviewed Labour and Socialist writings; and it was to me a very big addition to my knowledge and education. I don't think, however, we cared very much for Italy or Rome, as it was too much of a rush in travel, and too drab a conference we were attending. The Fascists were just beginning their time of strife and violence.

When Smillie and I were together in Parliament, we would generally be together at meal times, and sometimes have a smoke in the map room, and if time permitted on our way to our respective London diggings, call and just have a drink together ere we parted.

I remember how both he and Hardie, when staying with us at our house, would, along with my wife and me, talk reminiscently of men and movements we were interested in and had knowledge about,

and if my wife and they got talking about old time songs, Socialist hymns and poems, would carry on a conversation until I declared it to be bedtime.

Another loving soul who has entered my life is George Lansbury. I succeeded George as Chairman of the directorate of the *Daily Herald* and I would say here that whilst we have had very good editors, none surpassed George, and his heart, tongue and pen kept the *Herald* alive, when by all the rules of the newspaper game it ought to have died. It has had varying fortunes. When paper was 6d. per lb. and the shortage was on, George would find helpers when nobody else could. When jewels came from Russia a few years ago, he was very firm in saying that we couldn't accept them despite the fact that the paper was in a dire financial state. I know that we were very much guided by his advice, although it is fair to say that all of us who were then directors were against damaging our movement by accepting these proposed gifts. After events, I think, proved we were right.

Mr. and Mrs. Snowden have favoured us with their friendship right from the time they came into the movement. I knew them before their happy marriage. I presided at the first public meeting Mrs. Snowden, then Miss Annakin, addressed in St. James' Hall, Leeds, and when they came to London in 1906 and afterwards, I stayed with them on many occasions. She spoke in favour of my candidature, last election in 1924, and Philip sent to me on that occasion, the following bit of verse in dialect.

PHILIP SNOWDEN TO BEN TURNER.

"Tha'rt a bit of a poet thi'sel, Ben,  
Soa Aw think Aw'll send thi ■ rhyme,  
Just to wish thi' luck and to say ha' mich  
I want thee to win this time.

"For tha's been tried and tested i' Parliament,  
And tha's proved a reight good chap;  
Tha's allus spokken and voated for them  
'At were not in Luxury's lap.

"We want noa taxes on food, lad,  
Nor on cloathes nor shoes nor light,  
Tha's a better plan ner that, Ben,  
For keeping t' home fires bright.

"Soa Aw hoap at Batley and Morley,  
An' Ossett an' all the rest,  
We'll stick to Ben and return him,  
For he's one of our very best."

PHILIP SNOWDEN.

What a love Philip had for his mother, an old notable in the village of Cowling, on the edge of the moors beyond Keighley. The Yorkshire dialect poet, Professor Moorman, was so charmed with the old lady and her dialect talk that he had her to speak into the phonograph and the record is put away for future students of languages to hear a hundred years hence.

I could go on recounting friendships and close comradeship with very many of Labour's front rank of men and women and with many other people, but I am thankful to have lived and known so many folks in the long years of my active life. These include the late Bruce Glasier, Charley Bowerman, P.C., Susan Lawrence, but, above all, my constant companionship in the Trade Union world with Allan Gee, J.P., of Huddersfield.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### INCIDENTS

I USED to like long and at times lonely walks to put me into the mood to ponder over things. I am afraid I spent a long time to think and produced little from it !

Weavers, in the fine worsted trade, had oftentimes—especially in times of trade depression—to wait a week or two for a warp. I have known my father “play” five weeks for one. I have “played” three weeks at a time myself, and whilst the money was reckoned good, when working, the long play-times per year brought down the weekly wage average. When I had “downed” (which meant completing a warp) I have gone miles into the country reading, writing and “communing with nature” as I called it. Sometimes I have had a pal with me. I nearly always used to pal with folks older than myself, and have had a few good walks with pals. We have set off together, and after walking a few miles called at a village pub for lunch, got a pint of beer between us, a raw onion, some bread and cheese, and dined equal to princes. I wonder if anybody realises how nice a raw onion is to a cheese and bread luncheon after a few miles’ walk in the country in a forenoon ? It’s ■ feast for the gods if your stomach is right.

I remember, only a few years ago, being down

with a country squire at a place called "Fockerby." We were on County Council business. We called at a pub and had bread and cheese and onion. He had a bottle of beer. I had a cup of tea. We both enjoyed it, but that day I envied him his bottle of beer, and being teetotal my cup of tea was really a kind of penance.

Another time, in the 'eighties, when I was waiting for a warp, I set out from Huddersfield for a few days' change. I took the train to Sheffield and stayed with my cousins for the night. During the night they had an addition to the family, so I took my hook on the Sunday morning and went to Worksop by train. Then I walked and walked and walked, saw Sherwood Forest, a few of the ducal places, sat under the shadow of the great oak and revelled in the natural splendour of the forest. Later on I felt it time to walk to some settled place, and so trudged along as far as Mansfield. From there I took a train to Nottingham and arrived in the evening, tired but happy. I enquired from a policeman for a nice, neat, temperance hotel. He took me to one. I asked the kindly-looking old lady if she could oblige me with a bed, and asked how much it was. She told me 1s. 6d., and then, like an inexperienced person, I asked her if the bed was clean. Imagine anyone being pleased at such a question, but the lady evidently saw I was a country-bred one, so she lit a candle and took me upstairs and showed me a clean bedroom and bed. I thanked her courteously, had some food, and went roaming for an hour round Nottingham and then to bed, tired and sleepy.

The day following I was up early and saw a bit more of Nottingham.

Finding there was a day trip to Grimsby—there

were cheap trips then—away I went and had a good look round Grimsby, and found out there was a boat going to Hull. It was about 1s. to Hull, so away I went and had a short look round Hull docks. I confess I was tired, and asked a man if he could tell me of a modern temperance hotel. He gave me an address, and I went to it, but didn't like the look of it, so I pondered what to do. My money was also getting done. I had only twenty shillings to start with, and it was nearly finished. I had a consultation with myself. I had heard tell of people pawning their watches. I had bought one a few months before for 4s. It was an old silver one, and went erratically, so I decided to try and pawn it. Never having been in a pawnshop before, I shrank from the public gaze and darted up the passage to the pawnshop door. I imagined everybody saw me, as if anybody there knew me or cared twopence about me! We are often frightened of our own shadows! I asked the pawnbroker how much he would lend me on the watch. He said 4s. I plucked up courage to say "That's not much," and he raised it to 4s. 6d., so the watch went and the ticket came to me. I was thankful to get out of the pawnshop, for it had always been looked upon as domestic sin to visit such places. I know better now, although there is sometimes domestic sin connected with those who pawn goods regularly week by week. Having a bit of ready money, but not much, I said to myself, "It's summer, miss going to bed and go to the theatre"; so I paid sixpence for a place in the gallery and after it was over went into a pub and got a glass of beer and a twopenny pie—a jolly good supper—and by eleven was marching on to Goole. When I got to Hessle and walked into the churchyard to



get a glimpse of the time, it was just about midnight.

Coming out of the churchyard I forgot my way to Ferriby, en route to Goole, and could not make out the route from the signboard, so knocked at a house where all was dark, and a man popped his head out of the window and asked what I wanted. Having told him, he said "that way," pointing to some way, and slammed the window down. He was cross, and no wonder, at a young man being so "daft" as to waken another man out of his sleep to ask him the way to Ferriby. It made me wonder what to do, but seeing a light in the distance—the railway lights—I wandered down to Hessle pumping station and enquired if there were any trains to Ferriby, and the fireman said, "Not until seven." We had a chat, then he suggested I might lie down, and his bench became my bed and his sloping desk on the bench my pillow, but I slept the sleep of the tired for a few hours. At five o'clock he brought me a clean pail of water, gave me a rough towel to dry me with, and, after a good "souse," one felt as fresh as paint. He made a drink of warm tea, and, after giving him 3d.—all I could spare, and which he didn't want, he put me on my way to Ferriby. There I got a train to Goole, and after a swift look round Goole docks tramped on to Thorne.

At Thorne station they told me it was Doncaster Races. My money was very meagre by this time, but I trained it from Thorne to Doncaster, and went past all the tricksters on the course and saw the Leger run. I saw some horses fly by, and whatever the horse was which did win I don't know. The late King Edward—then Prince of Wales—was there in a box. I also saw somebody

run in for "welshing," and, after perambulating until I was worn out, hoofed it back to Doncaster station. On my way I spent 5½d. on a drink of beer and a sandwich, and found at Doncaster that I had just a few coppers over my fare back to Sheffield. There I borrowed a half-crown from my cousin, and decided that it was time to go home. On my way to the station I indulged in a two-penny pie, and just had sufficient for my ticket to Lockwood and home.

My total outgo for all that time, all that travel, and all that sightseeing, was 28s. 6d. It was worth it. The memory of the walks, the talks, the trips, and theatres, the racecourse, and all one saw, was worth it. I have had many jaunts off since then, but never—except in Russia—spent such a four days of crowded life.

During 1927 and 1928 there were many unjust attacks made upon myself by the left-wing element, but the man most blackguarded by them has been the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas, M.P.

He can give a Roland for an Oliver, and defended himself very well at all times and at all places. The feud Mr. Cook raised against him, however, got so fierce that he had to hit back and he did so with effect. I felt, however, that it was becoming detrimental to the movement for it to continue, and sent out the following communication to both Cook and Thomas. It was printed in our *Union Record* and published by most of the newspapers. It read as follows :

#### "STOP FRATCHING !

"As one of the old stagers in the Trade Union, Labour and Socialist Movement of this kingdom, I want to appeal to J. H. Thomas and to Mr. A. J. Cook to stop their fratching.

"I am not going to deny that Thomas has been subject to great provocation.

"It does not mend matters, however, to spread the sore in the fashion it is being spread at the present time.

"The Movement needs unity—not personalities.

"I want, therefore, to appeal to these two leading opponents to drop their offensive tactics, both in the newspapers and on the platform.

"If they can't shake hands together as they should, at any rate, shake hands with the movement and thus end a lamentable controversy."

I was somewhat surprised myself to learn that Southern people did not understand very fully the Yorkshire words, "Stop fratching." When folks disagree very keenly or have a difference of opinion or start fending and proving, we call it "fratching," and I candidly confess my ignorance, in thinking it was a commonly understood word!

Anyhow, it was my notion that they should (in fact that we all should) "stop fratching," as the movement was being disturbed by the personalities the left-wingers were indulging in.

Mr. Thomas has been very patient under much abuse, but he can stand a knock just as he can give a knock.

I have never been one to take the family away for a holiday. Up to a few years ago Mrs. Turner had to make Congress week do for hers and mine.

One of my pleasantest outings arising from my connection with the Labour Party was a trip arranged by Mr. Arthur Henderson and Herbert Stead (brother of W. T. Stead). A party of us went abroad, visiting Lucerne, Basle, Zurich, Stuttgart, Munich, etc., all the arrangements being made by Mr. Stead.

We had saved £35, after our American trip, and spent £28 of it.

The party included G. N. Barnes ; John Hodge, his wife and daughters ; two parsons, the Rev. H. Dunnico and the Rev. Geoffrey Ramsay ; G. H. Wardle ; Will Crooks and his wife ; J. R. Clynes and his wife, and Frank Goldstone.

I remember one night six of us, Mr. and Mrs. Clynes, Mr. and Mrs. Crooks, Mrs. Turner and myself, were in one compartment on a night train ride, when Crooks began his stories and his old ditties, including his song, "The Rocky Road to Dublin." I gave a fair share of the ditties also, and then Mr. Clynes gave us in his gentle way dozens of little Irish ditties that charmed us out of any sleep.

There is one feature about a party of Labour men and women, which I find all over. They know how to enjoy themselves soberly and sensibly and comradely. The teetotallers are the jolliest of the lot, so it's no use telling me that being teetotal makes you sour and dour ! It doesn't. Whisky may, but water doesn't.

My whiskers have been an asset to some of the cartoonists in recent years. I remember in *T.P.'s Weekly* "Matt" used them in fine decorative style. So did someone in *John Bull* and *Passing Show*, whilst in *Punch* their artist had me holding Captain Wedgwood Benn in my arms welcoming him to our Labour Party, and that great artist, Low, has used my whiskers to artistic effect.

I think the best tribute to them, however, was last Christmas time. I was going down to our post office just after Christmas, and passed two little nippers of about three and a half to four years old. As I went slowly past them, one said to the other, "See Father Christmas." The

other replied, "Eh, yes!" Having posted my letters and, turning round to walk back, one of the little lads peeped up into my face and said to the other: "It is Santa Claus!" and chuckling, they ran away with glee at having seen Santa Claus, so they thought.

It is not everybody who gets a mill offered him free of cost, but during the war period a well-known Yorkshire manufacturer, Mr. Jonathan Peate, of Yeadon, near Leeds, publicly announced he would give me a mill if I would start manufacturing.

My observations on the suggested "gift" were reported as follows:—

"Speaking in Batley Market Place, Mr. Turner said:—  
'I am prepared to take that mill if Mr. Peate is really in earnest about it. I will take it for myself and friends, and we will run it on co-operative and Socialistic lines. We would do our best to make it pay. I don't think he is in earnest, but if he is, I am.'

"Interviewed later by a reporter, Mr. Turner said:  
'There are mills which are worth having, and others which are out-of-date. If Mr. Peate is genuine in his offer, and the circumstances and surroundings are such as would appeal to any sensible business man, without doubt there are others besides myself who would be quite willing to avail themselves of his offer; but whether the experiment turned out successful or not would not prove that Socialism is right or wrong.'

I made due enquiries as to the sort and size of the mill offered me. It was out of the way, out of date, unsuitable for modern machinery and the offer became a ridiculous one. It would have done in 1820, but not in 1920.

Just now, when another new system of Local Government is coming in and the Boards of Guar-

dians going out it is a reminder that as a lad I filled up the voting paper for my father for the old Local Board when voting papers were delivered at the homes of those entitled to such a vote, and when the rent collector called for ours, was "capt" (surprised) because it was filled up. He had it generally to do when he called for the papers at the houses he went to, but father had voted exactly as he wanted, which was one reason why it was filled up before he came.

One of the happy incidents occurring to me when a Member of Parliament was one day when I happened to be walking down Whitehall towards the House and passed a queue of children making their way in the same direction, led by a teacher. He was up in front, and the kiddies at the back, knowing he wouldn't hear, grinned at me as I passed, and called "Beaver!"

I smiled, but said nothing, and kept on my way. About half an hour later, when I was walking through the cloakroom of the House, whom should I pass but this same little group of children. As soon as they saw me they started wishing the earth would open, and showed it in their faces.

Putting on as firm a look as possible, I went right up to them, and it was clear they expected a good lecture on how to be polite to the bearded.

"Never mind, kiddies," I said. "It didn't hurt me and it pleased you. But—" and I dropped my voice—"don't say it quite so loud next time!"

I am not much of a scholar, but it was my privilege to get out for our Union in 1917 and 1920 respectively a history of our Dewsbury and Batley section of our Union and its work, and also of our

Union as a whole. Anybody who desires to read more fully the struggles of a union whose members have had to fight every inch of the way for trades union recognition and for standard wages, shorter hours and cleaner conditions will get a glimpse of our Union's work and some of my work for the Union during the past forty-seven years.

I have also published a book of rhymes and prose in dialect, etc. I thought when we had our silver wedding many years ago that it might not be amiss to get out the book entitled *Dialect and other Pieces from a Yorkshire Loom*. I printed it at my own expense and gave the 250 copies away to friends, relations and others. It is of course out of print. Sometimes I would like to publish my verses and writings, but I am somewhat timid on both financial and general interest grounds.

I have written much dialect matter. I used to write "Sketches by Ike Longtung" in the *Huddersfield Examiner* nearly fifty years ago. Then for many years I wrote similar dialect sketches in the *Yorkshire Factory Times* under the same name. A few years ago the *Dewsbury Reporter* asked me to do them some dialect sketches for their paper which I did under the name "Sammy Soothill."

In a few anthologies and old comic almanacs and Yorkshire publications I have done a bit, and hope to do more still when I can find a bit of time.

## CHAPTER XXX

### SHODDY LAND

I LIVE in the centre of Shoddy Land. There is a lot of tommy-rot talked about shoddy.

What's shoddy and mungo? These two are two of the staple raw materials for cloth making in our district, known as the heavy woollen district. The heavy woollen district comprises the towns of Batley, Dewsbury, Ossett and Morley. It is the rag centre of the world. Rags from all parts of the world get to this area and the rag auction mart is as keen a market and nearly as noisy as the wool sale market in Coleman Street, London.

When I visited Coleman Street auction room many, many years ago, I thought the men bidding for bales of wool were half dotty. There were French, German, Belgians, Austrians and British—there are now also Americans—who shouted out or rather yelled out their bids as the auctioneer in his pulpit rostrum put up lot "so and so" for sale. I couldn't guess how he knew who the final bidder was for there would be a few thousand pounds worth of wool knocked down by him in not more than a minute to an excited, yelling multitude.

The same applies to the rag sales at Dewsbury, but they are not as speedy. These bales of rags come from various parts of the earth. Russia used to send a big supply of stockings when Britain was wise enough to trade with her under proper



diplomatic regulations, and I guess we shall again when a sane Government gets to grips with life's realities. There are also rags collected in Britain.

A "tatter" is a person who goes out collecting rags. When I was a lad, some used to give blocks of salt for a given weight of rags. Others used to exchange pots for rags, and the lower scale of tatter would be he who enticed children to bring a few rags for a toffee stick or a gaudy bit of paper at the end of a stick.

All these rags get to some other centre—some marine store dealer in many cases, or to some collector who knows their weight, and gives them a rough sorting. They then get sent to a larger dealer, or in some cases they go right to the local rag merchant or the rag auctioneer at Dewsbury, after which they are sorted into their many various qualities. It is a skilled woman's job to get them into their proper sorts for their proper values, and they are then sold to shoddy manufacturers, who again give them their final sorting and blending.

Some of the shoddies are sold at a bigger price per lb. than some of the wool at the wool sales commands. Second-time raw material from black merino stockings or from new clips from clothing factories is better raw material than some of the foreign wools, and will make up better, for all the dust and muck has been shaken out and the scouring and blending of one fine sort with another fine sort of pulled rags is an art and science in itself. There are many folks wearing nice, fancy cloths to-day who don't know they have shoddy on their backs. But they need not be ashamed. Kings and Princes wear it and like it when it is good raw material.

There are scores of little rag merchants around where I live who in normal times make a good living. The bad trade has squeezed a few out. The growth of a syndicate or two is wiping others out, but the Heavy Woollen districts is a home for little raggers who employ a few sorters for the bales of rags they buy and who know the value of rags from A to Z.

I am glad we were able, a few years ago, to put the rag sorting trade under Trade Board regulations. When the Waste Trade Reclamation Board was being established, the Ministry of Labour called me into consultation to see whether they should put the trade under a Board or not.

I was not against it being kept out of a Board, but when the matter was closely examined from the rag merchant down to the marine store dealer it was seen there couldn't be any division, and so all the waste material trades—scrap iron, scrap metal, rags, etc., came under it. It is a good job it did.

It has meant for women and girls employed at marine stores and at many a rag sorting place of the crudest sort a minimum living wage.

They get 7d. per hour, and rag sorters in the woollen rag sorting department 8d. per hour as against 2d. and 2½d. in pre-war days, and whilst some odd places dodge the Act,\* there are the big folks in the trade who do not.

I have been and am a member of the Board since its inception, being also Chairman of the Workpeople's side.

Reverting back again to the rag trade, our merchants sell their raw goods to big cloth firms who have their own rag machines to grind the rags into secondary wool, and do their own

blending or they sell them to shoddy manufacturers who in some cases employ hundreds of workpeople and who turn out raw material for cloth manufacturers. In many cases the raw material being as soft and as fine as superfine as the medium priced wools themselves. Some of the shoddies get as high in price as 3s. 6d. per lb. some get as low as 9d. per lb.

So do cross-bred wools and the lower classes or grades of wool. Formerly the rag sorter or rag picker or ripper was looked down upon by the other Textile workers. It isn't so now. She is a fine type of person, dresses equally as good as the weaver or the other factory worker, and I am glad to have lived to see and to have helped to get her into the ranks of the better living and the better paid.

I brought Mrs. H. J. Tennant, the wife of the ex-Under-Secretary for War, down to Batley when she was Miss May Abrahams, to look into the Rag trade to inquire about the health of the rag sorter and woman worker, and during the period of her Inspectorship at the Home Office she instituted many reforms which has led to cleaner, better, and healthier workshops than before.

The Shoddy (raw material) is sent to many parts of Great Britain, Scotland, West of England, Ireland, Wales, Lancashire, the Midlands, and it is a fact that some of the best shoddies are worn on the lawn tennis, cricket and sports grounds of this and other countries, and sweaters, jumpers and fine knitted garments for the upper classes as well as others, comes in its raw material from some of our best shoddy manufacturers in the Heavy Woollen district.

There is, however, more mixing of wool virgin wool now than there used to be. One old manufacturing friend of mine, the late Mr. J. Auty, J.P., the notable Temperance propagandist, used to carry a little bit of wool in his waistcoat pocket and in a joke would say "Of course I am a woollen manufacturer. Here is a sample." There would be years, however, when he didn't get a bale of virgin wool in his place, and he turned out millions of yards of cloth for the clothing manufacturers of Leeds and London at from 11½d. to 1s. 6½d. a yard. Before the war we had ranges of cloths that meant for a suit length and for an adult male you could buy it mill price for 4s., a better one for 6s., and a good one for under 10s.

There is some very decent cloth sold now to merchants and clothing factories at 2s. 6d. to 3s. per yard, and as a man's suit length is 3½ yards you can reckon up that by the time it gets to the wearer there has been a bit of conjuring going on.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### PROPAGANDA WORK

THERE is not much use being made at present of the old-time Socialist slogan of forty years ago, when we used to wind up in our perorations "The Nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange."

I think our speakers have learnt the art of plainer language than that. A number of stock phrases were used, like "using the national resources for the nation's needs." There is nothing amiss with them now, but they only get uttered very rarely, for our speakers in the Labour and Socialist world to-day are better educated and better read than hitherto, yet the plain folks of yesterday were as effective as many of the less plain folks of to-day. There was more voluntaryism in those days than now. Scores of men would go out into the highways and byeways on "shanks' mare," or cycle, to proclaim the message of Labour to what was termed backward areas, or, as an old Brighouse umbrella mender put it, "the benighted heathens in our own land."

Many a time a comrade has put up a speaker for the night and discommoded his family in so doing, and never a penny would the speaker take for his expenses, over his fares (and often not that), and never would his host let the visitor give anything towards the cost of hospitality.

I am afraid this is not so to-day ; in fact, it ought to be that fares and out-of-pocket expenses should be paid. There are a few top men—or men who think they are top—who have at times charged too much, but my experience with the men I know has been the other way about.

I remember taking Hardie up into the Bronte country one dinner-time to speak with me on a Trades Union Mission outside Howarth Station, in a blinding snow-storm, and I had a task on to make him take 10s. towards his expenses. Several times, on his visits to our area and our house, he has charged and wouldn't take any more than his bare railway fares. The last time Smillie came down from London he would only have half-fare, and no expenses, as another town was paying him the other half and finding him hospitality. So with Lansbury, Snowden, MacDonald, Henderson and others, and I mention these things because most of our leading folks go out willingly and for the good of the cause, and lies are told about them as to their fees and expenses. Some odd ones of the lesser lights have now and again done it too "thick."

In the burly-burly election fights there is a great amount of voluntary work done. Perhaps not as much as formerly, but the joy of doing something for the cause is too great to be missed.

A goodly number of our active people now are teetotallers. Some may be termed fanatical ; others are next door to being so, and most of our Labour halls and clubs are now non-intoxicating places. Personally I wish they all were, for the two things—drink and Labour politics—rarely mix. I say this, despite the fact that I am a member of eight clubs, seven of which sell intoxicating liquors.

These are chiefly Working Men's or Trades or Friendly Society Clubs. There is a great improvement in the habits of working folks. Education and example have done a bit towards it. In our industrial towns a drunken man is seldom seen ; a drunken woman hardly ever. There is now no glamour in getting drunk. It isn't manly to get drunk, and the refinement that is seen in conduct is a tribute to the teachings and preachings on our Trade Union places, and to our improved outlook on life.

There are cleaner habits in the streets ; less spitting, less disorder, and less bad language, although there is too much of that to be pleasant.

There is one evil which has become too prevalent, namely, the gambling propensity. I regret this, but another twenty-five years of Labour education will do more than the parsons have been able to do this past twenty-five years to convert the folks to a cleaner financial life. Whilst football and sport and cinemas have led to less drinking time, sport has made for more gambling practice, and the newspapers, by coupons and guesses and competitions, have encouraged the desire for a " bob on."

I trust I may be forgiven for this digression in an account of life as it is, but I am growing older, and want to see in the next twenty years as great a push forward in gentleness of life as I have seen come along during the past fifty years of my being here. I am not a hard back, joyless person. I like life and laughter, joy and enjoyment, and it can be had in abundance without the sidelines that do not help manhood or womanhood.

There are all sorts of mechanical changes in locomotion. As a lad I knew the old velocipede, the wood-wheeled contraption, the big wheel and

the little wheel. The solid tyred bicycle was followed by the up-to-date pneumatic cycle, and this is going out in favour of the motor-cycle, which, in turn, is being overtaken by the light car. I guess after I am gone there will be flying machines for middle class folks and elbow room for even some of the more prosperous working folks.

By the way, my first real cycling was on a tandem bicycle—a solid-tyred machine—perhaps forty years ago. I rode on the second seat, and as we drifted down a hill, we collided with the causeway, and the result was a split and torn pair of trousers and a grazed forehead and a damaged hand. I found myself under the bicycle in place of on it! I also tried the old three-wheeled tricycle. A heavy thing it was, and in my early Trades Union propaganda days, I rode hundreds of miles on it. It became a bit costly storing it at this railway station or that, and I sold it for Co-op checks valued in dividend for £6 10s., and ended my cycle-riding at the same time. It is easier in a tram, and quicker in a 'bus or a motor-car.

I wonder what some of the old pioneer Trades Union officials would think if they came back now and saw a fair number of leading Trade Union officials and labour leaders running a car, and several Unions finding their chief officials one. They would stagger back to their graves and say "Ther's summat rang" (something wrong). Our Union does not find our officials one, and I hope they don't, for our duties can be covered with bus or taxi or train. Yet I do not object to their having one of their own for family use and enjoyment. It's the new times that have



brought the new systems along. New times demand new measures.

Forty years ago we had not ten working men magistrates, twenty councillors, five aldermen or one mayor. Now we count them in their combined groups by the thousand. What seemed an impossible thing when some of us were on the soap-box forty-five years ago, namely, a Labour majority on City, County, Town, District and Parish Council and Board of Guardians is not uncommon in our industrial, and especially in our Mining areas. I never dreamt twenty-five years ago that I should see a Labour Prime Minister and a Labour Government, but what has been done once will happen frequently during the next quarter of a century.

The political, social, industrial and moral changes in my lifetime are great, and progressive. I may have done a little bit towards the bringing along of some of these changes, and if I have I am rewarded in seeing them, and if I haven't it is not for want of trying. It is the business of all of us to try and mend the world, and I can say with the old philosopher, "I have warmed both hands at the fire of life."

When I went to Leeds in 1889, there were very few big clothing factories, and trades organization was non-existent. There were scores of little sweat shops in the crowded parts of Leeds. I went up into bedrooms of houses where amidst the beds the garments were being made up for the million to wear. The folks worked in these places until late on at night, and one could see as a regular sight Jews and Jewesses, and at times Gentiles taking work out to, or back from fever-infested dens.

It has all gone, there has arisen a new generation of Jews, they are amongst the best behaved and the best organized workers in the trade. I remember when they started their Club in Stamford Street, Leeds, and what a welcome they gave to the Gentile visitors.

After a score of years, they invited me to one of their celebrations, after getting wages up to a reasonable level, and they were not only effusive but profusive in their recognition of what I had tried to do in their early greener days.

The women were, and are yet, difficult to organize, but nothing like they were in the late eighties and nineties. A postcard I have in front of me now is headed "Leeds Tailoresses' Union." It is a notice calling me to a meeting, in 1889, and reads :

"MR. TURNER.—I will be at St. Stephen's Cocoa House, Victoria Square, to-morrow, Thursday, from 12.35 to 1.25 p.m. Primary business: re meeting for organisation of girls in Jewish or sweating shops.

Yours truly,

GEORGE GUEST, *Secretary.*"

I remember him as the first Secretary under the late Miss I. O. Ford; he was followed by Miss Agnes Close, and later on they amalgamated with the Clothiers' Operatives' Union,—now the Tailors' and Garment Workers' Union.

Leeds is now free from sweat shops. The place is the big home of big factories. I think the biggest and one of the best is that of Montague Burton, Ltd. I went round their place recently. They have a huge acreage of one-storied buildings. In one room were 2,000 machinists, in another, hundreds more, and pressing benches and machines

by the score. There were also the old time tailor on the board, and cutters were very numerous. The biggest sight was at lunch time or dinner time as we call it in the North of England : there were 4,000 men, women, lads and lasses having their meal in the huge canteen. It is a daily sight.

From the old sweat shops of 1890 to the modern factory of 1929 is a drastic change for the better. I went into the pressing room in the old days where the steam and the heat was nauseous and dangerous to health. Here, as at other factories, they have little disturbed atmosphere for the fans, the electrically opened windows, the exhaust pipes, the incursion of fresh air every short period makes it clean and healthy, and will reduce materially the incidence of consumption and other ailments that afflicted the workers forty years ago.

Education of the people, owner and worker, and organization of both has produced in these ways, as well as in wages, a wonderful change.

I have had something to do with Labour newspapers, off and on, for many years. I used to write bits from the mill to the *Cotton Factory Times* in the 'eighties, and even do odd paragraphs now. Besides the *Yorkshire Factory Times*, and the old *Workman's Times*, I wrote for the *Huddersfield Echo* in the early 'eighties until it died ; also for the *Northern Pioneer* of Huddersfield, a live radical paper, until it died about 1884.

Then at Leeds I helped to start two Labour papers in the early 'nineties, which suited us, but our finances couldn't keep them going.

I did not have anything to do with the literary part of the Labour Party paper, *The Daily Citizen*, except to lose a few pounds in it as with the others. The same with *The Labour Leader* and *The New*

*Leader*, and later on in the *Daily Herald*. I don't call the many pounds put in these ventures lost for the papers suited me and did good work in various ways in helping to lift the Labour Movement up.

I wrote for over thirty years (except for seven weeks due to illness) in the *Yorkshire Factory Times*. It ended with the General Strike.

I have been connected with the miracle of Fleet Street, *The Daily Herald*, many years, being on the directorate for the past ten years.

What a hectic time we used to have. By all the rules of the newspaper game it ought to have died many a time over. George Lansbury's big heart and a devoted staff kept it alive with the help of many, many friends.

I remember the time when we used to wonder where the next week's raw paper supplies would come from. The worst time, I think, was when paper was scarce and the price very high, and we paid 6d. per lb. for it from a firm with a foreign name and from a firm in Scandinavia.

The story of its trials is graphically told in Lansbury's book, *The Miracle of Fleet Street*. The directors have resolved on at least three occasions that the *Herald* should finish on a given date. We have given the staff notice twice and yet it went on, some other brain wave and purse factor turned up, and it lives to-day and will do so. The Trades Congress and Labour Party took it over in 1923, and I became Chairman of Directors, after being Vice-Chairman for the three years before.

When we left Gough Square for bigger premises and more machinery, we took risks, but we succeeded. When we took another block of premises at Tudor Street we were losing money hand

over fist, but it was good business and the paper is reckoned as one of the live papers of the world.

It has not tried any of the expensive stunts of other papers, like the immoral insurance schemes, nor has it tried to live on anything but truth and reason. The directors have not always been united, we have had some changes. It is not an easy job reporting to the Trades Congress or the Labour Party, where the folks are keen, but on the whole good-tempered, critics.

There is one thing all the directors can say : they don't get fat fees for being on the Board, they are paid third class fares and expenses, and not even the Chairman has a salary, and certainly wants none, but it is with many of the staff as it is with the movement, a labour of love, and even of delight to have an organ that gives us our news and our views as a movement.

A big movement like ours ought to have more than one daily paper, but with three editions of our *Daily Herald* we can jog along until such times as the movement can find another half million of capital to start a northern edition and give us the million circulation we keep hoping for.

## **APPENDIX**



## TO MY GRANDCHILDREN

Come to yor grondad—and donce on his knee,  
Once he wor little an' helpless like ye !  
Yor th' second cletch at's come trailin' along,  
Makin' th' owd homestead boath happy an' throng.

It's a mixed world yo've come tummelin' in',  
All sorts o' vice—yet more virtue ner sin.  
Ther'll be temptations—but this thing is true,  
Yo'll be repaid for each good deed yo' do.

Ther's lots o' time yet afoor yo' can paddle,  
Yers have to pass afoor wage yo' can addle ;  
But yo'll pay aght ivvury penny yo' cost,  
If yo' keep smilin' an' nivvur get lost.

Donce on mi knee, aye, an' pull at mi hair  
If yo enjoy it—why, what do ah care ?  
Yor reit an' streit i' yor limbs, an' yor bonny,  
Dash me, yo'n lovely blue een like yor gronny !

*From Cotton Factory Times.*



**A GREETING TO THE TRADES UNION  
CONGRESS DELEGATES**

*September 7th to 12th, 1925.*

**WELCOME TO SCARBOROUGH**

Welcome to my own loved Yorkshire  
With its acreage so great,  
With its people staid and solid—  
A fine bulwark of the State.

We may not have great refinement,  
And our speech may sound uncouth,  
But our "Yea" is most emphatic,  
And we speak the plainest truth.

For a moment we may linger  
Ere we grasp you by the hand,  
But once gripped in Yorkshire fashion  
We with you will faithful stand.

Yorkshire homes are homes of neatness.  
And our housewives have a pride  
In their hospitable welcome  
To a seat at their fireside.

We rejoice in hearty fashion  
And, despite the stress and strife,  
We attempt to overcome it  
And enjoy each hour of life.

There's a stateliness and grandeur  
In our Castle, in our Bay,  
Scarbro' gives a healthy pleasure—  
Winter, Summer, every day.

Gentle breezes from the ocean  
Add to all the charms and graces,  
And they waft—to you—a welcome  
To the Queen of Watering Places.

## I DO NOT WANT TO OWN THE WORLD

I do not want to own the world,  
Nor anything that's in it,  
But live my life where it is cast,  
Enjoying every minute.  
I care not for fat title deeds,  
Nor stocks, nor shares, nor wealth,  
If I can have good company,  
And that great gift, good health.

'Tis folk I love ; a world is nought  
Except for people in it.  
'Tis their regard that helps us on,  
And everyone can win it.  
'Tis wife and bairns, and neighbours, too,  
With human love—the leaven  
That makes us linger in the world,  
And try to make it heaven.

So come, my friends, along with me,  
With true ambition striving.  
To make some other person glad  
By constantly contriving  
To spread fair happiness around ;  
Our services bestowing,  
By doing good, yet doing it  
Without our ever knowing.

## A GODLY CITY

I dreamt of a great Godly city,  
Where nothing was low, coarse, or mean,  
Where man was both husband and comrade,  
And woman was mother and Queen,  
Where children with bright healthy faces  
Were assets a nation did prize ;  
And laughter and joy were abounding,  
And prayers breathing love reached the skies.

A city where all that was noble  
O'erwhelmed every thought that was vile  
Where goodness ranked higher than riches,  
And wealth had no power to beguile ;  
Where hunger was banished for ever,  
And wastefulness lost all its charm ;  
Where man stood erect in his freedom,  
And woman was free from man's harm.

Oh ! great Godly city ! Thy coming  
Is needed—aye needed to-day,  
Thy coming is heralded proudly  
As wickedness passes away.  
Then as we rise higher in manhood,  
May all try to overcome wrong,  
And each in our place shall do something  
To help human freedom along.

## THE GREATEST OF VIRTUES IS LOVE

There's nothing more sweet than a smile  
Unchecked—without passion or guile.

    A curving of lips  
    From out of which slips  
A message that makes others glad.  
    The cheeriest ray  
    That brightens the day  
And lightens the heart that is sad.

There's nothing more thrilling than song,  
It helps you to travel along

    The way that is hard.  
    It brings its reward  
In easing the mind of its pain.  
    It touches the whole,  
    It sweetens the soul,  
And makes people happy again.

The greatest of virtues is love,  
It comes from the angels above.

    In sorrow it soothes,  
    In trouble it proves  
The surest and best way to peace.  
    It lifts up the race  
    To humanity's place,  
And bids wars and conquests to cease.



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